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Samuel Carr

SERMONS

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

VOL. III.

Printed by W. Nicholson, Warner Street.

SERMONS

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE REVEREND AND PIOUS

SAMUEL DAVIES, A. M.

Sometime President of the College in New Jersey.

Fifth Edition.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

To which are now added,

THREE OCCASIONAL SERMONS,

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MEMOIRS AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR,

AND

TWO SERMONS ON OCCASION OF HIS DEATH,

BY THE

REV. DRS. GIBBONS AND FINLEY.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR W. BAYNES, 54, PATERNOSTER ROW; VERNOR AND HOOD, POULTRY; AND D. OGILVY AND SON, HOLBORN.

1804.

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The vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and—the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory.

THE true notion of the present world is, that it is a state of preparation for another; and therefore, such as we habitually are here, such shall we be for ever. Mankind are now forming, like clay in the potter's hands, some for honour, and some for dishonour; some for wrath, and some for glory. And as the potter does not put his vessels to their respective uses till they are finished and prepared for them, so neither are men removed from the present state, and fixed in their respective residences in the eternal world, till they are prepared, finished, and completely fitted for them. The vessels of mercy are prepared beforehand for that glory with which they shall be filled. And, on the other hand, the vessels of wrath are fitted to destruction, and fit for nothing else, before they are dashed to pieces by the iron rod of divine justice.

It is a criticism worthy to be mentioned, even in this solemn place, where I never chuse to make a parade of useless learning, that the apostle uses a different form of expression, when speaking of these different sorts of persons. The preparation of the vessels of mercy for glory, he ascribes to God, as his work. Hence he uses an active verb, προητοίμασεν. referring expressly to God as the agent—*the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.* But the fitting or preparing the vessels of wrath for destruction he does not ascribe to God, but intimates, that it is their own work. Hence he uses a passive particle—κατηρτισμένα, *the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*—fitted by

their own wilful sin and impenitence, during the long-suffering of God towards them, which had a tendency to lead them to repentance.

—*Vessels of wrath*—how terribly emphatical is this phrase! Vessels dreadfully capacious of divine wrath! to be filled to the brim with that burning liquid! But how beautifully significant is the metaphor,—*vessels of mercy!* vessels formed, prepared, finished, adorned by the gentle and skilful hand of divine mercy! vessels capacious of mercy, and to be filled, to overflow, with glory!

The gracious and sovereign God, who might justly have dashed these vessels of wrath to pieces as soon as ever they became marred clay in his plastic hands, endures or bears with them with much long-suffering, as well as with the vessels of mercy: bears with them, as he has with you, for days, for months, and years, notwithstanding their daring provocations, and ungrateful abuse of his patience; which nothing but divine patience could bear with so long. But all this time, they contracted more and more filth and pollution; they became every day less fit for their Master's use; and rendered themselves more and more fit for destruction, and fit for nothing else.

And shall these vessels of wrath answer no valuable use in the great house of the universe? Will they serve to furnish out no apartment of this vast building? Will they be of no use in this numerous family of reasonable creatures? Yes; they will furnish out the regions of hell, a place as necessary and useful in the universe, as it is now constituted, as prisons and bedlams upon the earth. They will serve as public and terribly illustrious monuments of the divine power and justice, and the righteous resentments of heaven against sin. They will serve as loud warnings to all worlds, to deter them from that destructive evil. And thus they will answer a valuable, and even a benevolent end in the creation, and contribute to the public good; as the execution of criminals tend to guard the laws from violation, and so promote the good of society. They will serve, as my text informs you, "to shew the wrath and make known the power" of God: their de-

struction will illustriously display the glory of these perfections. The flames of hell will burn dreadfully bright, to reflect a terrible and yet amiable splendor upon them: and it is for this terrible but righteous end, among others, that God now endures them with so much long-suffering; that his perfections and the honour of his government may be the more illustriously displayed in the execution of deserved punishment upon them.

But the vessels of mercy are intended and prepared for nobler uses. On them God intends to display the glory, the riches of the glory of his more gentle attributes, his love and grace. With them he intends to furnish out the many mansions of his heavenly house. By them he intends to let all worlds see what glorious vessels he can form, not only of the dust, but of the shattered and polluted fragments of human nature, broken and polluted by the fall of Adam, and by their own.

The view in which I now consider my text, leads me to confine myself to this practical inquiry,

Wherein does preparation for glory, and wherein does fitness for destruction consist?

Some of you, perhaps, when you heard the text, were struck with horror, and ready to bless yourselves at the sound: for "now, you thought within yourselves, we shall have a sermon upon the horrible doctrine of predestination." But you see I propose to consider the text intirely in a practical view; and therefore your fears are imaginary. Nor do I chuse to consider it in this view, to let you see with what dexterity I can evade the genuine sense of it, and make a mental reservation of a doctrine so unpopular: but because whatever else the text in its connection may mean, it does naturally lead me to this grand inquiry; and because my present design is to speak to your hearts, about an affair which you are all concerned and capable to know, and not to perplex your minds with a controversy, of which not many of you are competent judges. I must own, indeed, I am not altogether a sceptic in that doctrine. It is not an entire blank in my creed; nor am I at all ashamed to declare

my sentiments in a proper time and place. At present I shall only tell you, that I cannot be persuaded God has made such a world as this, without first drawing the plan of it in his own omniscient mind. I cannot think He would produce such a numerous race of reasonable and immortal creatures, without first determining what to do with them. I cannot think the events of time, or the judicial process of the last day, will furnish Him with any new intelligence to enable Him to determine the final states of men more justly than He could from eternity.—But away with all controversial thoughts at present; and let an object of more importance engross all your attention: for you will find, I am not now going to plunge and drown you in this unfathomable depth. This you may be sure of, that, if you have not made yourselves fit for destruction, and fit for nothing else, by your own wilful sin, you shall never be doomed to it by virtue of any decree of God. And, on the other hand, you may be equally sure, that he never decreed to admit you into heaven, unless you are prepared for it; nor to exclude you, if you are so.—I now proceed to the grand inquiry,

Wherein does preparation for glory, and wherein does fitness for destruction consist? This will naturally lead me to enquire into your habitual dispositions and behaviour: for it is by comparing these to the nature and quality of the regions of heaven and hell, that you can discover which you are fit for. If your temper and dispositions be heavenly and divine, you may be sure that you shall be admitted into those blessed mansions. But if, on the other hand, your temper and dispositions be infernal and diabolical, if they be such as are prevalent and universal in hell, you may be equally sure, that, unless they are changed, you will be doomed for ever to that dismal region. This must, methinks, appear quite evident to common sense. The righteous Judge of all the earth will always invariably do that which is fit. If you are fit for the enjoyments and services of heaven, you need not fear but he will admit you: never yet has such a soul been excluded. And what can you reasonably desire more? Would you have heaven encumbered with such as could

not be happy, even in the very regions of happiness, for want of a proper relish for the enjoyments there? But, if you are fit only for the infernal prison, is there not a propriety, as well as justice, in your being confined there? The same propriety, as that madmen should be shut up in bedlam, or notorious criminals in a dungeon. Therefore,

1. Are you fit for heaven? Do you love and delight in God, in a God of infinite purity? If not, the enjoyment of his presence, and the beatific vision of his face, which is the principal ingredient of heavenly happiness, could afford no happiness to you. Do you delight in the service of God, in contemplating his glories, in celebrating his praises, and in the humble forms of worship in his church on earth? Do these afford you the most exalted pleasure? If not, heaven is no place for you; for these are the eternal exercises there: and to such of you as have no pleasure in them, the heavenly state would be an eternal drudgery. Do you delight in holiness? if not, what would you do in the region of holiness? Alas! to you it would be an unnatural element. Are the saints, those whom the world perhaps calls so with a sneer, because they make it their great business to be holy in all manner of conversation, are these your favourite companions? Is their society peculiarly delightful to you? and are they the more agreeable to you, by how much the more holy they are? If not, what would you do among the holy inhabitants of heaven? with what pleasure could you mingle in society with them, while your temper and theirs are so directly contrary? Are your hearts full of ardent love and benevolence to mankind? If not, how would you breathe in the pure element of perfect love?—Without such dispositions as these, you are no more fit for heaven than a sick man for a feast, a swine for a palace, or a blind man to view the splendors of the sun; and therefore, you may be certain, that God, who will never do any thing that is unfit, will not admit you there, while you continue such as you now are.

You must also consider, that if you are fit for those pure and blessed regions, it is God that has made you

so, by his own almighty power; *He that hath wrought you for this self-same thing is God*, 2 Cor. v. 5; and you have been deeply sensible that the work was indeed his, was divine and Godlike, and beyond the utmost efforts of your degenerate nature. You are able indeed to fit yourselves for destruction: that you can easily do: and that, I am afraid, some of you have effectually done already. But it is God alone that can make you fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. And have you ever been the subjects of this divine operation? Have you ever felt the power of almighty grace opening your blinded minds, breaking your stony hearts, and melting them into floods of ingenuous sorrow, under the warm beams of a Saviour's love, like snow before the sun? Have you ever felt it subduing your favourite sins, and making them more bitter to you than death, and implanting and cherishing every grace and virtue in your souls? Has the Holy Spirit turned the prevailing bent of your souls towards holiness, so that you esteem it the principal ornament of your nature, and make it the object of your eager desires, and most vigorous pursuit? Does holiness appear to you amiable in itself, and not only a pre-requisite to your happiness, but the principal ingredient of it? And is heaven itself the more endeared to you by this consideration, that it is the region of pure unmingled holiness, that no unclean thing can enter there, and that even the way that leads to it is holy? If these things are not matters of experience with you, you may be sure you are not *afore prepared for glory*.

Let us now take a view of the opposite dispositions, and we shall make the same discovery:—Suppose your hearts are set upon the enjoyments of this life as your principal happiness; suppose you are chiefly solicitous and laborious to heap up riches, or to indulge your sensual lusts and appetites; supposing this be the ruling passion of your souls, are you fit for heaven? In heaven there are none of these low and sordid enjoyments: and what pleasure would you have there, who have a taste only for these things? You are indeed fit to dig in the earth, like moles, and steal the serpent's food: you are fit to scrape up riches: fit to wallow in

the mire of guilty and debauched pleasures: fit to live in this world, could you always make your residence in it: this gross, impure, earthly element suits your depraved constitutions. But can you once imagine you are fit for heaven; fit to breathe in that pure salubrious air; fit to share in those refined and spiritual enjoyments; fit to join in the exalted employments of seraphs, while this is your prevailing temper? Surely, no. And what then will become of you? The impure and gross region of this world, so agreeable to you, will not, always last, and you will not probably live in it as long as it does last: but death, ere long, will tear you away from all that is dear to you under the sun. And alas! whither then shall you go? where then shall you take up your eternal residence?—I leave you to pause and think upon it.

Suppose the service of God be a weariness to you, and the thoughts of Him unwelcome to your minds: suppose your hearts are full of angry malignant passions: in short, suppose you love sin more than holiness, can you flatter yourselves you are fit for heaven? Alas! it would be as unnatural an element to you as for a fish to live out of water, or you to live in it.—But the farther illustration of this will fall under the next head; therefore,

2. Inquire, Whether your temper and disposition be not infernal and diabolical, and such as renders you fit for destruction, and for nothing else? Are your hearts destitute of the love of God? "No, you answer; we thank God we have never been so bad as that comes to." But if you love God, whence is it that you have so few affectionate thoughts of Him? that you do not study to please Him in all things, and delight in his service? If you love God, how comes it that you do not keep his commandments, which is the grand decisive test of love? Alas! instead of loving him, are not your hearts disaffected to him? As evidences of this, may I not produce your dislike to serious thoughts of him, your aversion to his service, your disregard to his will as the rule of your conduct, and your headlong propensity to follow your own pleasure? Do not the murmurings and insurrections of

your hearts against him and his dispensations, your uneasy rebellious spirit under his providences, your aversion to his service, do not these shew that you are really disaffected to him? Now this is the very temper of hell; this is the constituent of a devil; the very worst ingredient in that infernal composition: and therefore, unless this temper be changed, you must dwell with devils for ever, it is fit all the enemies of God should be shut up together in one vast prison. It is unfit that rebels and traitors should always run at large, or mingle with loyal subjects. Alas! sirs, a soul without the love of God is devilized already, ripe for destruction, and fit for nothing else.

Again, Are there not some of you who have no pleasure in devotion, no delight in conversing with God in his ordinances? The posture of humble worshippers at the throne of grace is not easy and agreeable to you; and hence that you have prayerless families and prayerless closets; and if you join in public worship once a week, it is a mere customary formality. You cannot bear to wean your thoughts and tongues from temporal affairs in the few hours devoted to the service of God, though they make up but one day in seven; you do not delight in religious conversation, but it strikes you dumb, like the man without the wedding garment. Well, in the infernal regions you will have as little of this exercise as you could wish. The patient will then be hopeless and incurable, and therefore no farther means will be used with him. Then you will be no more troubled with prayers, Bibles, sermons, religious conversation, or the tedious hours of the Lord's Day. And, since you have no taste for such exercises, is it not fit you should be sent into those ungodly regions, where you shall never be employed in them?

Again, Are not the minds of some of you defiled with all manner of sin and moral pollutions? And do not these render you fit only for that region of corruption and impurity? Do you not indulge an angry, contentious, unforgiving, malicious temper? Well, that is the very temper of hell, and renders you fit for it. Nay, these outrageous passions, when

broke loose from restraint, will create a hell in your own breasts, and not only expose you to punishment, according to justice, but become the ingredients of your punishment, according to the course of nature. Do not some of you indulge yourselves in backbiting, and all the base malignant arts of defamation, and perhaps are firebrands in the neighbourhood where you live? Well, in hell you shall have enough of this work; and, while you indulge this spirit, you are preparing yourselves for that land of universal hostility and revenge. Is not cursing and swearing the familiar language of some of you? Well, this is the language of hell; and you are now practising the infernal dialect, and preparing to converse with the ghosts below in their own stile, in the region of imprecation and blasphemy. Do not some of you live in the practice of the works of the devil; that is, of those works to which he tempts you, and in which he has persisted, who was a sinner from the beginning? Are you not then fit for that everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels? Even the gentle lips of Jesus himself would tell you, as he did the Jews, that *You are of your father the devil*, John viii. 44. since you habitually do his works. And is it not fit you should be doomed to the society of your infernal father?

Do you not find your hearts are habitually hard and insensible? or if you have some kind of repentance, it is only a servile horror, extorted remorse, and involuntary pangs of desperate agony. This is the very kind of repentance in hell, where they still love sin, and yet cannot but upbraid and torment themselves, because they have ruined themselves by indulging it. Conscience tortures them with the keenest reflections; but they feel no kindly ingenuous relentings, no generous sorrows, proceeding from a sense of the intrinsic vileness and baseness of sin, and from a sincere disinterested love to God and holiness. Hence their repentance is only a punishment, but has no tendency to their reformation. And is not this the very nature of your repentance at present?

But I need not dwell long upon this enquiry. It is

enough to tell you, in short, that if you are still in your natural state; if you still retain that temper which is natural to you as the degenerate sons of Adam, without any supernatural change; that estrangement from God, that disaffection to him; that carnality and earthly-mindedness; that blindness and insensibility about divine things; that presumption, security, and love of lawless pleasure; I say, if this be still your prevailing temper, you are not meet for the heavenly inheritance; for, in order to be heirs of that, you must be born again of God. But you are fitted for destruction; for by *nature you are children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3. and while you continue such, you must be *vessels of wrath*. Therefore bring the matter to a short issue, by this decisive enquiry: "Have I ever been born again? Have I ever experienced such a mighty change in the temper of my mind, as may, with propriety, be called a *new birth*, or a *new creation?*" For, *if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new*. 2 Cor. v. 17. Have I thus been renewed in the spirit of my mind? or am I still the same *old man*, with my old affections and lusts?—This, my brethren, is the grand decisive enquiry; for if you have been begotton again, St. Peter tells you, it is to *an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away; reserved in the heavens for you*. 1 Pet. i. 4. But Jesus, the friend of sinners; Jesus, who never pronounced a harsh sentence, and who never will exclude from heaven one soul that is fit for it, nor doom to destruction one soul that is fit for any thing else; even Jesus himself has strongly assured you with his own gracious lips, that *except you be born again*, born of the spirit as well as of water, *you cannot see the kingdom of heaven: for that which is born of the flesh is flesh*, John iii. 3, 5, 6. carnal, corrupt, unholy, and utterly unfit for that spiritual, pure, and holy kingdom.

Here I would enlarge a little upon an observation, which I just hinted at before, namely, That these corrupt dispositions are not only criminal, and therefore will bring upon you the penalty of the divine

law, according to justice, but that they are, in their own nature, destructive, and therefore, according to the course of nature, will be your ruin. Suppose God had made no positive constitution to exclude you from heaven; yet while you have no relish for the employments and enjoyments of that state, it is impossible, in the nature of things, you should be happy there. As you must have animal senses to render you capable of animal pleasures, so you must have spiritual senses to render you capable of the pure spiritual pleasures of paradise; and without these you can no more be happy there than a stone can enjoy the pleasures of an animal, or a beast those of reason: you would be miserable wretches in paradise itself. Do but consider in what things the bliss of heaven consists; and methinks you will rather fear, than hope and desire admission there. Is religion so pleasing a thing to you, that you might expect you should be completely happy if it were but perfected in you? Alas! are there not a thousand things more agreeable to some of you? But in heaven there are none of these things, and how do you expect to be happy there? There must be another heaven created for you, a Mahometan paradise of sensual pleasures, or else your temper must be changed. The paradise of saints and angels does not suit your vitiated taste.

Farther, Suppose God should not inflict any positive punishment upon you with his own immediate hand, but only suffer the course of nature to run on, and let your corrupt dispositions have full scope and range without restraint, would not these dispositions alone create a hell within you! Anger, malice, envy, and every wicked and turbulent passion against God and his creatures, will break out into outrageous hurricanes, when the kind restraints under which they now lie are taken off, and they will agitate and distract your souls for ever, and render you incapable of all peace, serenity, and joy. Then also, all temporal enjoyments, the objects of your love and desire, and the only things you have now to allay your raging thirst for happiness, will be for ever torn from you, and leave you to famish in a dismal void; and then

you will pine away with eager, impatient, insatiable desires, which will gnaw your hearts, and prey upon your spirits, like hungry vultures. Suppose you were now stript naked of every enjoyment, and nothing left you but bare being, with your usual capacity of enjoyment; suppose you were deprived of the light of the sun, the products of the earth, the comforts of society, and every imaginable blessing, and doomed to wander, forlorn and hungry, in some dismal desart, how consummately miserable would this privation alone render you! But this will be the doom of the ungodly, as soon as death breaks their connections with this world. They must leave all their enjoyments behind them, and yet carry their eager desires, their insatiable avarice of happiness, along with them; and these will make them capacious vessels of pain; for a capacity of enjoyment not satisfied, is a dreadful capacity of positive misery. Thus, you see your destruction comes upon you according to the course of nature; and you will die eternally, though the hand of the executioner should never touch you, as the unavoidable result of your present temper, the deadly disease under which you labour.

And hence you may see, by the way, that it is no act of cruelty or injustice in the Supreme Judge, to shut you up in the prison of hell; for what else should he do with you, when you are fit for no other place? Is it cruel to exclude the sick from entertainments, or persons infected with the plague from the society of the sound and healthy? Is it cruel to confine madmen in Bedlam, or criminals in prison? Certainly no. Therefore God and his throne will be guiltless for ever.

And now, my dear brethren, have any of you been convinced that this is really your case? that your temper and conduct is such as at once renders and proves you utterly unfit for heaven, and, as it were, naturalizes and seasons you for the infernal regions? Alas! this is a shocking and alarming discovery indeed: but, blessed be God, you have made it in time: you have made it while in the land of hope, and in a state of trial; and therefore there is reason to hope that,

if you now take the alarm, and earnestly use the means of grace, your condition, bad as it is, may be happily altered; and you, who are now fit for nothing but destruction, may yet be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. It is because there is some reason for this hope, that I have honestly exposed these alarming and unpopular things to your view. You must know them sooner or later: and if you should not know them till you fall into destruction, alas! it will be then too late. Believe me, my brethren, these things do not proceed from a morose malevolent heart, nor are they intended to drive you into despair. I speak to you with melting pity and affectionate benevolence; and instead of driving you into despair, my design is to save you from it for ever, and bring you to have a good hope through grace. And as the evidence of what I have offered is so plain to common sense, do not pretend you cannot understand me, and do not know what I would aim at. I am only inculcating upon you this self-evident truth, that unless you are prepared for heaven, you shall not be admitted; and that, if you are fit for nothing but destruction, you must be destroyed. Can any mathematical demonstration be more plain than this? And are any of you so void of sense, reason, and faith, as not to understand and beleive it?

I now presume, that such of you as have made this discovery with regard to yourselves, are also convinced, that you cannot possibly escape destruction, unless your present temper be changed, and quite a new frame of spirit given you.

And who, do you think, can work this happy change in your hearts! If you are so vain and ignorant as to flatter yourselves that you can effect it in your own strength, make the trial, and you will soon be undeceived. It is God alone that can work in you both to will and to do. My text tells you, it is He that prepares the vessels of mercy for glory: it is his Holy Spirit alone that is equal to the arduous work.

But in what way is this influence to be expected? Is it in a course of impenitent sinning? of presumption and security? of sloth and negligence? No; to

expect it in that way, is to tempt the Lord your God. But such of you as would escape the damnation of hell; such of you as have any desire to be for ever happy, hear me, seriously hear me, and I will tell you, in a few plain words, what you must do, if you would expect the aids of divine grace to prepare you for glory.

You must immediately think seriously of your condition: you must labour impartially to know the truth of your case: pry into the dreadful secrets of wickedness in your hearts: review your sinful lives: reflect upon the purity and justice of God and his law, and what you have deserved for a whole life of unnatural rebellion against him: read and hear the word of life with solemnity and attention, and use all proper means to furnish your minds with religious knowledge. It may pain you at first to confine your minds to such objects; but it must be done: and there is no disputing against necessity: besides, the pain is medicinal; it will contribute to the recovery of your dying souls.

Again, You must accustom yourselves to frequent importunate prayer. If ever you be saved, or prepared for salvation, it will be in answer to prayer: therefore engage in it, persevere in it, and never give over till you obtain your request.

Further, You must guard against every thing that tends to divert your minds from this grand concern; as excessive hurries and cares about earthly things, vain and vicious company, and every avoidable temptation.

Finally, You must persevere in this course, if you hope to succeed; and never rest till you feel the dispositions of heaven wrought in your souls. A pang of remorse, a serious fit, a transient prayer, will not suffice, but you must hold on your way to the last. You may expect difficulties in this new course, and, you will probably meet with more than you can now foresee or expect. But you must break through all; for your immortal interest, your all is at stake.

This is the course I would advise you to, if ever you hope to be prepared for glory. I cannot give you any the least encouragement in any other way. If any other can shew you a more easy, and yet safe course,

and produce sufficient authority for it, you may take it: but, for my part, if I teach you what I learn in my Bible, I can give you no other directions; nor do I expect to be saved in any easier way myself. And therefore, if you will chuse another, you must be answerable for it. Remember I warn you against it, and would not be accessary to it for ten thousand worlds.

Now, if this course must be taken, I ask when, do you think, must it be begun? Will you appoint to-morrow, or next year, or old age, or a sick-bed, for that purpose? Alas! you may never live to see that time. Before then you may drop into destruction, as rotten fruit fall to the ground by their own weight. Therefore now, this present fleeting now, is the only time you are sure of; and consequently, this is the only proper time to begin this course. Now then, now, while my voice is sounding in your ears, form the resolution, and carry it into immediate execution. Bear it home upon your hearts to your houses, and there let it dwell till the great work is done. O! that you did but know its importance and necessity! then you could not delay it one moment longer.

And now, if you have any regard for the God that made you, for the Lord that bought you, or for your own everlasting happiness, take this course immediately.—If you have any need of excitements, take the following.

1. Consider your present dangerous situation. You hang over the pit of destruction by the slender thread of life, held up only by the hand of an angry God, as we hold a spider, or some poisonous insect, over a fire, ready to throw it in. You are ripe for destruction, and therefore in danger every day, every hour, every moment of falling into it. You are as fit for destruction as a murderer for the gallows, or a a mortified limb to be cut off. Such polluted vessels of wrath must be thrown out of the way into some dark corner in hell, that they may no more incumber or disgrace the more honourable apartments of the universe. And is this a situation in which it becomes you to be merry, and gay, and thoughtless, and eager after the trifles of time? O! does it not become you rather to

be on your knees at the throne of grace, and vigorously pressing into the kingdom of God?

2. Reflect with how much long-suffering God has endured you, notwithstanding all your audacious and repeated provocations. One would think one day's sinning against so holy and gracious a God, by a creature so deeply obliged to him, would make your case desperate, and that the evening of such a day would be the hour of your execution. But he has patiently borne with you for days, for months, for years, perhaps for scores of years. And all this time he has followed you with his blessings every moment, and granted you the means of preparation for glory. And yet you have been thoughtless, disobedient, ungrateful, rebellious still. How justly then may he inflict punishment upon you! And how industriously will his goodness and severity, his mercy and justice, be displayed in his treatment of you! What could you have desired more, in point of time, opportunity, persuasives, than you have enjoyed! Will it not then appear evident that your destruction is entirely of yourself, and that, as I told you before, God and his throne will be guiltless for ever?

3. Consider how dreadful will be your punishment, if you should perish at last by your present wilful negligence. My text tells you what will be the design of your punishment; it will be to shew the wrath of God, and make his power known. Such will be your punishment, as will be fit to shew that it is almighty power that inflicts it, and that it is an almighty God who is angry with you. It will be his professed design to display the dreadful glory of his vindictive attributes upon you, particularly his justise, as the supreme Magistrate of the universe: and even his justice deserves to be displayed; for justice is not that ugly, grim, horrible thing, which criminals imagine. In a ruler, especially in the supreme and universal Ruler, justice is not only a majestic and terrible, but it is a lovely, amiable, ingratiating attribute, essential to his character, and to the public good, and so it appears to all competent judges; that is, to all who are not self-flattering criminals, and therefore parties. The display

of this attribute therefore upon proper objects, is necessary to give a full view of the Deity to the world; to represent him as he is.

Now, whatever attribute of his he intends to display in any of his works, he always does it in a manner worthy of himself. When his design was to display and glorify his creative power, wisdom, and goodness, see! what a stately, well-furnished universe he spoke into being! What a magnificent, Godlike building! When his design was to shew the riches of his grace towards our guilty race, what wonders did he perform! What inimitable exploits of condescension and love! His only begotten Son must become a man, must struggle with all the calamities of life for three-and-thirty long and painful years, must expire in torture upon an ignominious cross, and redeem the guilty with the blood of his heart. This was Godlike love and grace indeed, beyond all example. O! *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?* Micah vii. 18. He is as much distinguished from all other beings by the wonders of his love and grace as by the eternity of his existence, or by that wisdom which planned the universe, or that power which produced it out of nothing. When, in prosecution of the same design, he intends to give a farther display of the riches of his glorious grace upon the vessels of mercy, what Godlike provisions hath he made for them! *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things he hath prepared for them.* He hath prepared for them a city, such a glorious residence, that he is not ashamed to be called their God. He is not ashamed to own the relation, because he has acted up to the character, and worthy of himself. *Heb.* xi. 16. And when his design is to shew his avenging wrath, and make his punitive power known; when it is to shew what Godlike punishments he can inflict, such as may, by their terror, declare him to be the author, and serve as loud warnings to all present, and, perhaps future creations, to deter them from the breach of his sacred laws; and when the subjects of the punishment are strong capacious vessels of wrath, fit for nothing but destruction; I say, when this is the case,

what Godlike vengeance will he execute! what signal, unexampled punishment will he inflict! The design of punishment, which is not the reformation of the criminal, but the benefit of others, and the display of his perfections, require that he give a loose to all the terrors of his power. And what miracles of misery, what terrible illustrious monuments of vengeance will that perform and erect! As far surpassing all the punishments inflicted by mortals, as the creation of the world out of nothing exceeds all the works of human art.

And are you proof against the energy of such considerations as these? Then you are dreadfully fitted for destruction indeed! For the strongest persuasives to deter you from it, which God himself can reveal, or the human mind conceive, have no weight upon you!

But may I hope that I shall succeed at least with some of you this day to fly from this tremendous destruction, into which you are this moment ready to fall? Alas! it is hard, if even a stranger cannot prevail with so much as one soul, in so large an assembly, and in a point so reasonable, and so strongly enforced by your own interest. But I must leave this warning with you, and if you do not remember it now, you will remember it millions of ages hence, when the remembrance of it will torment you with intolerable anguish.

There are sundry in this assembly, I doubt not, who, by comparing their dispositions with the nature of heavenly happiness, may make the welcome discovery, that they are, in some measure, prepared for it. To such happy souls I have time only to say, that if this be your character, you may be sure that immense happiness shall be yours: your present heavenly temper is a certain pledge and earnest of it. You may be sure God would never make you fit for it, and then exclude you from it.

And, on the other hand, if you find that the dispositions of hell are subdued in you, assure yourselves God will not doom you to it. Can you think he would gain your hearts and allure your love, and then

bid you depart from him, to languish and pine away with the eager anxious pantings of disappointed bereaved love? Will he doom you to reside for ever among those whose works you detest, and whose society you abhor? No; he will thoroughly prepare you, and make you holy, and then advance you to dwell for ever in that presence which you love, in the element of holiness; to breathe in that clear refined air, to live in that wholesome climate, so agreeable to your constitution; to be employed in those services in which you delight, to enjoy that sublime and delicate happiness which you relish, and to converse in that society which you affect, and which is of the same temper and spirit with you.—And for that blessed region may we all be prepared, and there may we all meet at last, to enjoy that endless felicity which awaits those who firmly put their confidence in God, through Jesus Christ! Amen.

SERMON XLIV.

The Nature and Necessity of true Repentance.

Acts xvii. 30.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.

WE here find St. Paul in as learned an assembly as perhaps he ever appeared in. We find him in Athens, a city of Greece, famous all over the world for learning; a city where Socrates, Plato, and the most illustrious philosophers of antiquity, lived and taught. We find him in the famous court of Areopagus, or Mars-Hill, where the wisest men and best philosophers of this wise and philosophical city were met together; in the same court where Socrates, the most likely candidate in all the heathen world for the honours of martyrdom, had been accused and condemned, and for very much the same crime, namely, introducing a foreign religion, and bringing the gods of the country into contempt. And how does the apostle conduct himself in these critical circumstances? Why, instead of amusing them with a learned harangue, instead of confirming them in their idolatry, and vindicating himself, by publicly professing, with poor Socrates, that he worshipped the gods of the country, and sacrificed at the established altars; instead of this, I say the apostle boldly, though in a very handsome and genteel manner, exposes their superstitions, calls them off from their idols to the worship of the one true God, the Maker and Ruler of heaven and earth; and, having asserted these fundamental articles of natural religion, he introduces the glorious peculiarities of revelation, and preached Jesus Christ to them, as the Saviour and Judge of the world.

In my text he inculcates the great gospel-duty of

repentance as binding upon all mankind (philosophers and judges, as well as the illiterate vulgar, in Athens) as well as in the most barbarous countries of the earth.

The times of this ignorance God winked at. By the times of ignorance, he means the times previous to the propagation of the gospel in the heathen world, who for many ages were sunk into the most gross ignorance of the true God, and into the most absurd and impious superstition and idolatry, notwithstanding the loud remonstrances of the light of reason, and the various lessons of the book of creation, so legible to all. When it is said that God winked at these times of ignorance, it may mean, as our translators seem to have understood it, that God seemed to connive at, or not to take notice of this universal ignorance that had overspread the world, so as to send his prophets to them for their reformation. In this view, there is a strong antithesis between the first and last parts of my text. *q. d.* "God once seemed to connive at the idolatry and superstition of mankind, and to let them go on, without sending his messengers to call them to repentance; and in these dark times their impenitence was the less inexcusable. But now the case is altered; now he has introduced a glorious day, and he plainly and loudly calls and commands all men everywhere to repent; and therefore, if you now continue impenitent, you are utterly inexcusable." Or the word may be rendered, *God overlooked* these times of ignorance: he overlooked them by way of displeasure: he would not favour such guilty times with a gracious glance of his eye; and in righteous displeasure, he did not so much as give them an explicit call to repentance: or he overlooked them by way of forbearance. Ignorant and idolatrous as the world was, he did not destroy it, but bore it from age to age, with a design to publish a more explicit command to repent: and now that time is come; that time, for the sake of which a long-suffering God had borne with a guilty world so long. Now he commands all men everywhere to repent; all men, Gentiles as well as Jews: everywhere in the dark heathen lands, as well as in the enlightened spot of Judea.

Repentance is indeed a duty enjoined by our natural reason, and strongly enforced by the Jewish religion; but it is the gospel that affords the strongest motives and allurements, and the best helps and advantages for repentance. The gospel was first introduced by a loud call to repentance: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, was the united cry of John the Baptist, of Christ, and his disciples. And St. Paul sums up the substance of his preaching in these two articles, *Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* Acts xx. 21.

Repentance is universally acknowledged to be an essential ingredient in the religion of a sinner. They who deny the christian religion, and particularly the necessity of Christ's death to make atonement for sin, they deny it upon this supposition, that the light of nature teaches us the necessity of repentance, and that alone is a sufficient atonement. Thus, even Infidels, Jews, Pagans, and Mahometans agree in asserting the necessity of repentance. It is this grand catholic uncontroverted duty, and not the little disputable peculiarity of a party, that I am now about to inculcate upon you: And *he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear.*

But here, I hope, you are ready to request me, "Pray let us know what repentance is, before you exhort us to it. How may we know what it is to repent, and whether we have truly repented or not?"

If this be your desire, it directly coincides with my main design: and I shall endeavour, with the utmost plainness and faithfulness, to tell you what gospel-repentance is, and help you to determine whether ever you have been the subjects of it.

Now it is evident, both from scripture and common sense, that every pang of sorrow for sin and every instance of reformation, is not that repentance which we have now under consideration. If horror of conscience, and fears of hell, could constitute true repentance, then Judas was a true penitent: for his horror and fear was so great, that he could not live under it. If sudden pangs of terror and remorse, with some resolutions to amend, could constitute true repentance,

then Felix, the heathen governor, was a true penitent; for we are told, that, *while Paul reasoned before him concerning temperance, righteousness, and the judgment to come, he trembled,* Acts xxiv. 25. and seemed resolved to give him another hearing on these subjects. If a reformation in many instances were the same thing with repentance, then Herod, the murderer of John the Baptist, was a true penitent; for we are told, *he heard John gladly, and did many things at his exhortation.* Mark vi. 20. These knew nothing of repentance unto life; and therefore we may feel what they felt, and yet remain impenitent.

I scarcely think there are any of you so hardy and reprobated of God, as never to have experienced any sort of repentance. It is likely there is not one in this assembly but has sometimes been scared with dreadful apprehensions of death, hell, and the consequences of sin; and perhaps you have cried and wept to think of your sinful life, and trembled to think what would be the end of it. You have also prayed to God to forgive you, and resolved and promised you would reform. Nay, it is possible the terrors of the Lord and a sense of guilt may have almost overwhelmed and distracted you, haunted you from day to day, and disturbed your nightly slumbers. On these accounts you conclude, perhaps, that you are true penitents: but alas! after all this, you may be but impenitent sinners. True evangelical repentance has the following distinguishing characteristics; by which I request you to examine yourselves.

I. It extends to the heart as well as to the practice. Every true penitent indeed has an affecting sense of the many sins and guilty imperfections of his life; but then his repentance does not stop there, but he looks into the horrid arcana, the secrets of wickedness within. He traces up these corrupt streams to the more corrupt fountain in his heart, from which they flow. A blind mind, a stupid heart, a heart disaffected to God, that could live content for months, for years, without loving God, a heart dead to his service, a heart insensible of eternal things, a heart excessively set upon things below, a secure conscience, a stubborn

ungovernable will; these to the true penitent appear the greatest crimes, while by a thoughtless world they are hardly noticed as slight imperfections. Hence when his walk in the eyes of men is unblameable, and even imitable, he still finds daily occasion for repentance and humiliation before God. For O! his heart, or his inward temper is not such as it should be: he does not love God nor man as he knows he should: he does not delight in the service of God as he should: every thought, every motion of his heart towards forbidden objects alarms him, like a symptom of the plague, or the stirring of an enemy in ambush; and he is immediately in arms to make resistance. The world in general are very well pleased if the matter of their actions be good, and if they abstain from what is materially evil: but this does not satisfy the true penitent: he narrowly inspects the principles, the motives, and the ends of his actions; and there he finds sufficient cause for mortification and sorrow, even when his actions in themselves are lawful and good. In short, every true penitent is a critic upon his own heart; and there he finds constant cause for repentance while in this imperfect state.

The proof of this is so evident, that I need hardly mention it. Can you suppose it will satisfy a true lover of God and goodness, just to have a clean outside, while his heart is a mere mass of corruption? Will it content such a one, that he performs all the outward duties of religion, if there be no life or spirit in them? Will God account that man truly penitent, who thinks it enough that he is not guilty of open acts of wickedness, though he indulges it, and loves it in his heart? No; such repentance is a shallow superficial thing, and is good for nothing. David's repentance reached his heart. Hence, in his penitential psalm (li.) he not only confesses his being guilty of the blood of Uriah, but that he was shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin, and earnestly prays, *create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.* Psal. li. 5, 6, 10. And he is deeply sensible of the want of truth or integrity in the inward parts.

Now, my brethren, if this be an essential ingredient in true repentance, do not some of you see that you are destitute of it? and consequently that you are still impenitent sinners, and ready to perish as such? A dreadful conviction! But do not shut your eyes against it; for till you see your error, you cannot correct it.

II. In evangelical repentance there is a deep sense of the intrinsic evil of sin, and a hearty sorrow for it as done against God.

Many that think they repent of sin have no proper sorrow upon the account of sin against God, but only on account of the punishment it is like to bring upon themselves. It is not sin they hate, but hell. Were it possible for them to enjoy their sins, and yet be happy, they would never think of repenting; and hence repentance is really an hardship in their view. Need I tell you that such a servile forced repentance is good for nothing. If the criminal is very sorry, not because he has offended, but because he is to be executed for it, would you call him a true penitent? If your slave cries and trembles, not from a sense of his offence against you, but for fear of the lash, do you think he truly repents of it? No; it is self-love, and not the love of duty; it is fear of the punishment, and not hatred of the crime, that is the principle of this servile ungenerous repentance.

Hence you may see you may be very sorry for your sin, because it may fix a scandal upon your character, because it may have injured your temporal estate, or because it may ruin you in the eternal world: I say, you may be very sorry for sin on such servile reasons as these, and yet know nothing of true repentance. True repentance is a more kindly generous thing; it proceeds from an affecting sense of the baseness and malignity of sin in itself. Sin appears to the true penitent, as some sorts of poison to us; that is, not only hateful because it is deadly and destructive, but hateful and nauseous in itself. I do not mean that the fear of punishment is no igredient in true repentance: the love of God and self-love are very consistent, if the latter is kept in a due subordination to the former;

and therefore the fear of punishment has great weight even with the evangelical penitent. But I mean the fear of punishment is not the principal, much less the only spring and motive of true repentance: the true penitent hates sin, even when he is not thinking of heaven or hell, but only viewing it in its own nature. Though it were allowed him to go to heaven in the ways of sin, he would by no means chuse it. Heaven itself would be the less acceptable to him, if it were the end of such a course.

He is also deeply sorry for sin, as against God, or as contrary to him. As rebellion against his authority, as a contrariety to his holiness, as an opposition to his will and pleasure, as a most base ungrateful return for all his goodness, and as the cause of all the agonies of the blessed Jesus; he hates it, he mourns over it with ingenuous and kindly relentings of heart. It was sin in this view, as against God, that lay heaviest upon David's heart. He seems to have forgotten the injury he had done to Uriah and his wife, while all his attention was engrossed by the horror of his crime, as against God. *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.* Psalm li. 4. It was this view of sin that armed Joseph, in the heat of youth, with power to resist the solicitations of his mistress. *How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Gen. xxxix. 9. O! the thought of sinning against God, against so glorious, so gracious and excellent a Being, pierced him to the heart, and he could not bear it. Thus it is with every true penitent. It wounds him to the heart to think that he should treat so good and holy a God so basely. This thought would break his heart, even though sin should be attended with no danger to himself; and it does in fact grieve him, and melt down his soul into generous sorrows, even when he has not one thought of his own danger.

Nay, of so generous a nature is evangelical repentance, that the penitent soul never melts so freely, nor bursts out into such a flood of ingenuous sorrows, as when it has reason to hope that a gracious God has freely forgiven it. Then it sees the base ingratitude

and complicated vileness of sin, as committed against so gracious a God. God's forgiving the penitent is a reason to him why he should never forgive himself. If God had concealed the glory of his grace, and rendered himself less lovely, he would be less sensible of the evil of sinning against him, and less sorry for it. But O! that he should sin against a God who is so gracious as to forgive him after all! This thought cuts him to the heart. Hence the evidences of pardon, and the hope of salvation, do not put an end to true repentance, but, on the other hand, promote it. This blessed hope indeed abates the terrors of a slave, and mixes many sweets in the bitter cup of repentance; but it is so far from putting a stop to the flow of generous filial sorrows, that it opens new springs for them, and causes them to gush out in larger streams!

How different is this from the general temper of the world! If they repent, it is while hell stands open before them, and the load of guilt oppresses them. But could they believe that God has forgiven their sin, and that they shall notwithstanding be saved, they would be very easy about it; nay, they would most ungenerously, from this very consideration, take encouragement to sin the more boldly! This is more than the secret sentiment, it is the avowed profession of multitudes. Ask them how they can go on impenitent in sin, and be easy in such a course? their answer is, *God is merciful; and they hope he will forgive and save them after all.* What is this but an explicit purpose to sin against God, because he is good? and to abuse his mercy, if he will be merciful? Nothing but the lash can keep such sordid slavish souls in awe. Their hearts are dead to gratitude and every generous passion. If God will have them to repent, he must give them no hope of pardon and happiness; for as this hope rises, their repentance ceases, and sin appears a harmless inoffensive thing. But how different is this from the generous temper of the true penitent! It wounds him more to offend a sin-pardoning than a sin-punishing God. And never does his heart melt so kindly, as when under the warm beams

of divine love; never does he repent so heartily as with a pardon in his hand, and with the prospect of heaven open before him. Do not think this is an excessive refinement of repentance, for common sense may tell you that God will never accept of that repentance which has the punishment and not the crime for its object: and this generous temper is assigned to the true penitent in the sacred scriptures. See Ezek. xvi. 63. After God has promised many blessings to the Jews, this is mentioned as the consequence, *Thou shalt remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.* So (Ezek. xxxvi. 31.) after many promises of rich blessings, it is said, *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations.* You see this shame and confusion, this penitential remembrance and self-lothing, are the effect of God's being reconciled. When he is pacified, then they are ashamed, confounded, and lothe themselves.

Brethren, does your repentance stand this test? Examine and see; for if it does not, it is only a repentance to be repented of.

III. True repentance extends to all known sin, without exception.

If sin, considered in itself, or sin as done against God, be the object of true repentance, then it follows, that whatever is sin in itself, or against God, must be the object of it. Every sin, whether it consists in neglecting what is commanded, or doing what is forbidden; whether it be immediately against God, against our neighbour, or ourselves; whether it be fashionable, constitutional, pleasing, or painful; every sin, without exception, as far as it is known, is hated and lamented by the true penitent. He should indeed regard them according to their different degrees of aggravation; but he should not except any of them, even the smallest. They are all forbidden by the same divine authority; all contrary to the holy nature of God; all opposite to the obligations of duty and gratitude we are under to

him; and therefore they must be all repented of. This was the character of David, *That he hated every false way.* Psalm cxix. 128.

Now does not this consideration prove some of you impenitent sinners? Do you not except some sins out of your repentance, and plead for an indulgence to them? If so, you may be sure your hearts are not right with God.

IV. True repentance always includes reformation.

There are many whose whole life seems to be one continued struggle between the strength of sin and conscience; and they run round in a circle of sinning and repenting, repenting and sinning all their days. Sin is so strong that it will prevail, in spite of all the struggles of conscience; and conscience remains so vigorous, that it still continues to struggle, though without success. They commit sin, then are sorry for it; then commit it again: and in this vicissitude they spend their lives Nay, the repentance of some is so far from reforming them from sin, that it rather encourages them to return to it; for now, they think, they have cleared off the old score, and they may venture upon a new one; till that also swells very high, and then they have another fit of repentance to clear off this new account.

Alas! brethren, is this repentance unto life? What does that sorrow for sin avail, which leaves the heart as much in love with it as ever? The only reason why sorrow is a necessary ingredient in repentance, is, because we will not, we cannot forsake sin, till it be made bitter to us; and therefore, when our sorrow has not this effect, it is altogether useless. Can that repentance save you, which is so far from being an ingredient of holiness, that it is a preparative to sin? A repentance that answers no other end but to make conscience easy after a debauch, and prepare it for another surfeit!

Is this the nature of true repentance? No; it is the character of every true penitent, that sin has not an habitual dominion over him. Rom. vi. 14. Remember that maxim of the wise man, *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh*

them, shall have mercy. Prov. xxviii. 13. Observe, not only confessing, but also forsaking them, is necessary to the obtaining of mercy. The same thing appears from the various expressions used in scripture to describe repentance. To repent, in the language of the Bible, is to depart from our evil ways; to cease to do evil, and learn to do well; to cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts: which expressions signify not only sorrow for sin, but especially reformation from it. In vain therefore do you pretend you repent, if you still go on in the sins you repent of. If you indulge yourselves in any one known sin, however small you may think it, you are utter strangers to true repentance. I do not mean by this, that true penitents are perfectly free from sin in this life: alas! their painful experience makes the best of them sensible of the contrary. But I mean two things, which deserve your notice; the one is, that every true penitent has an habitual dominion over sin: the principles of religion and virtue are prevailingly uppermost in his soul, and habitually regulate his behaviour. As for gross overt acts of sin, he is habitually free from them, and indeed generally this is no great difficulty. To him it is no such mighty exploit to abstain from drunkenness, swearing, injustice, or the like. And as to his daily infirmities, they are contrary to the habitual prevailing bent of his soul, and the matter of his daily lamentation. And this introduces the other remark I had in view; which is this, that it does not appear a kind of privilege to the true penitent that he cannot be perfect in this life; but it is the daily grief and burden of his soul that he is not. Many seem well pleased that this is an imperfect state, because they think it furnishes them with a plea or an excuse for their neglect of the service of God, and for their sinful indulgences. In short, sin is their delight, and therefore freedom from it would be a painful bereavement to them; and they are glad they are in such a state as will admit of their retaining it. Now such persons, as I observed, do really esteem it a privilege to be imperfect, and they rejoice in it as their happiness, that they are able to sin: but it is quite the reverse with the true penitent. Perfection in holiness,

and an entire freedom from sin, is the object of his eager desire and most vigorous pursuit; and he can never be easy till he enjoys it. If he cannot enjoy the pleasure of serving God as he would in the present state, he must at least enjoy the pleasure of grieving over, and lamenting his guilty imperfections. If he cannot get free from sin, his old enemy, he will at least take a kind of pleasing revenge upon it, by hating and resisting it, and lothing it and himself, upon the account of it. In short, the remains of sin, all things considered, and taking one time with another, afford him more uneasiness, perplexity, and sorrow, than all other things in the world. O, If he were but delivered from this body of death he would be happy, however oppressed with other burdens; but while this lies upon him, all the world cannot render him easy and happy.

From the whole you see that reformation is an essential ingredient of true repentance; and in vain do you pretend that you repent of sin, if you still indulge yourselves in it. You may try to excuse yourselves from the frailty of your nature, the imperfection of the present state, or the strength of temptation; but in spite of all your excuses, this is an eternal truth, that, unless your repentance reforms you, and turns you from the outward practice or secret indulgence of those sins you are sorry for, it is not repentance unto life.

V. and lastly, Evangelical repentance implies a believing application to God for pardon only through Jesus Christ.

Evangelical repentanc does not consist in despairing agonies and hopeless horrors of conscience, but is attended with an humble hope of forgiveness and acceptance; and this hope is founded entirely upon the merits of Jesus, and not of our repentance and reformation*.

How opposite to this is the prevailing spirit of the world! If they repent, it is to make amends for their sins, and procure the divine favour by their repentance, and thus even their repentance becomes a snare

* See the foregoing Sermon.

to them, and one cause of their destruction. In this sense, a bold saying of one of the Fathers may be true: "That more souls are destroyed by their repentance than by their sin;" that is, sin is evidently evil, and they are in no danger of trusting in it to recommend them to God. But even their superficial servile repentance has the appearance of goodness, and therefore they make a righteousness of it; and upon this quicksand they build their hopes, till they sink into remediless ruin.

Thus I have endeavoured to open to you the great gospel-duty of repentance, as distinguished from all counterfeits and delusive appearances. I hope you have all understood me; for I have laboured to make myself understood, and spoke as plainly as I could. If you have experienced such a generous evangelical repentance as has been described, you may venture your souls upon it, that it is repentance unto life; but if you are strangers to it, I may leave it to yourselves to determine whether you can be saved in your present condition.

I have only two or three remarks more to make for the farther illustration of this subject. The first is, that all the principles of degenerate nature can never produce this generous and thorough repentance, but that it is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit. Self-love, and the other low and slavish principles of nature may produce a servile mercenary repentance, proceeding from the fears of punishment; but only the love of God, and the noble principles of the new nature, can bring you to a kindly ingenuous repentance from noble motives; and it is the Holy Spirit alone that can shed abroad the love of God in your hearts, and implant these generous principles of the new nature.—The second remark is, that this generous supernatural repentance is not the first repentance of an awakened sinner. No; he is first alarmed with terror and dreadful apprehensions of punishment; and all the springs of nature are put in motion before these nobler principles are infused, and he is brought to a genuine evangelical repentance.—Therefore, 3dly, The only way to attain to this supernatural repentance is,

to use all proper means to excite the springs of natural repentance, particularly, to reflect upon your sins, upon their number and aggravation, and your dreadful danger. While you are destitute of the love of God, let self-love excite you to be sorry for your sins. While you cannot see the intrinsic evil of sin as against God, see at least the insupportable misery it is like to bring upon you. If you have not such generous souls as to mourn over sin as against a sin-forgiving God, at least mourn over it as against a sin-punishing God. And while the principles of nature are thus exerted, who knows but God may work in you diviner principles, and give you repentance unto life!

My subject is now ripe for an application; and this shall be nothing else but a short illustration of the other parts of my text.

Let me then, in the first place, publish the royal edict of the King of Heaven in this assembly: *God commandeth all men to repent*; he commands you in various ways; commands you with the motions of his Spirit striving with you, and by the voice of your own consciences, which is the voice of God! commands you by his providence, which tends to lead you to repentance, and especially by his gospel, which he has sent to you for this end. He now commands you by my mouth; for while I speak what his word authorises, it does not lose its efficacy, nor cease to be his word by passing through my lips. Remember, he commands you, he lays his authority upon you, to repent. You are not left to your discretion in the case. Dare you reject the known express command of the divine majesty? Should a voice now break from the excellent glory, directed to each of you by name, saying, *Repent! repent!* would it not startle you? would it not shock you, to set yourselves in opposition to so express and immediate a command of the God that made you? Well, his command to you in the gospel is as real, as authoritative, and binding, as an immediate voice from heaven. And dare you disobey it? Dare you go home this day with this additional guilt upon you of disobeying a known command of the supreme Lord of heaven and earth? Dare you provoke him to jealousy?

Are you stronger than he? Can you harden yourselves against him, and yet prosper? I again proclaim it aloud in your hearing, The King of kings, my Master, has issued out his royal mandate, requiring you by these presents, to repent, upon pain of everlasting damnation. This day it is proclaimed in your ears, therefore, this day repent. If you refuse to repent, let this conviction follow you home, and perpetually haunt you, that you have this day, when you were met together, under pretence of worshipping God, knowingly disobeyed the great gospel-command. And to the great God you must answer for your disobedience.

In the next place, my text tells you, he commands all men to repent: all men, of all ranks and characters. This command therefore is binding upon you all. The great God cries to you all, *Repent!* Repent, young and old, rich and poor, white and black, free and bond: —repent, ye young sinners, now, while your hearts are soft and tender, and your passions easily moved, and you are not hardened by a long course of habitual sinning:—repent, ye grey-headed veteran sinners, now at last repent, when the load of sins, heaped up for so many years, lies so heavy upon you, and you are walking every moment on the slippery brink of eternity: —repent, ye rich men; ye are not above this command;—repent, ye poor; ye are not beneath it:—repent, ye poor slaves; your colour, or low state in life, cannot free you from this command:—repent, ye masters, for your sins against your Master who is in heaven. In short, God commandeth all men, kings and subjects, the highest and the lowest, and all the intermediate ranks, to repent.

To render the call still more pointed and universal, it is added, *He commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent.* Everywhere, in city and country; in palaces and cottages; in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, wherever the trumpet of the gospel sounds the alarm to repent; in Virginia, in this very spot, where we now stand. Here the command of God finds you out, and calls you to repent. Repentance is not a local duty, but it extends as far as human nature, as far as the utmost boundaries of this guilty world. Wherever there

are sinners under a dispensation of grace, there this command reaches. It reaches to the busy merchant in his store, to the laborious planter in the field, and to the tradesman in his shop; to the sailor tossing on the waves, and to the inhabitant of solid ground; to the man of learning in his study, and to the illiterate peasant; to the judge upon the bench, as well as to the criminal in the dungeon; to the man of sobriety, to the unthinking rake, and to the brutish debauchee; to the minister in the pulpit, and to the people in their pews; to the dissenter in the meeting-house, and to the conformist in church; to husbands and wives; to parents and children; to masters and servants; to all the sons of men, whatever they are, wherever they dwell, whatever they are doing; to all these the command reaches. And do you not find yourselves included in it? If you are men, if you dwell anywhere upon this guilty globe, you are included; for let me tell you once more, God commandeth all men everywhere to repent.

Nor are you allowed to delay your compliance. Repentance is your present duty: for *now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent:* now, when the times of ignorance are over, and the gospels sheds heavenly day among you: now, when he will no longer wink, or connive at your impenitence, but takes strict notice of it with just indignation: now, while the day of grace lasts, and there is place left for repentance: now, before you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and while his spirit is striving with you: now, while his judgments are in the earth, and your country is surrounded with the terrors of war: now, while he is publishing his command to a guilty country to repent, by the horrid sound of trumpets and cannons*: now, while you have time, which may be taken from you the next year, the next week, or perhaps the very next moment: now, while you enjoy health of body, and the exercise of your reason; and your attention is not tied down to pain and agony: now, and not to-morrow; not upon a sick bed; not in a dying hour: now is the time, in which God commands you to repent:

* This Sermon is dated New-Kent, May 22, 1757.

he does not allow you one hour's delay; and what right have you to allow it to yourselves? Therefore now, this moment, let us all repent; all without exception. Why should there not be one assembly of true penitents upon our guilty globe? And O! why should it not be this? Why should not repentance be as universal as sin? And, since we are all sinners, O! why should we not all be humble penitents? Repent you must, either in time or eternity, upon earth, or in hell. You cannot possibly avoid it. The question is not, *Shall I repent?* for that is beyond doubt. But the question is, "Shall I repent now, when it may reform and save me? or shall I put it off to the eternal world, when my repentance will be my punishment, and can answer no end but to torment me?" And is this a hard question! Does not common sense determine it in favour of the present time? Therefore, let the duty be as extensively observed as it is commanded: Let all men everywhere repent. Blessed God! pour out upon us a spirit of grace and supplication, that there may be a great mourning among us, that each of us may mourn apart, and our wives apart; that we may *mourn, as one that mourneth for an only son; and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for a first-born.* Zech. xii. 10. Grant this, for Jesus's sake! Amen.

SERMON XLV.

The tender Anxieties of Ministers for their People.

GALAT. iv. 19, 20.

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

NOTHING could be more agreeable to a generous spirit that loves God and mankind, than to be fully satisfied of the real goodness and happiness of his fellow-creatures; and nothing is more painful than an anxious jealousy and fear in a matter he has so much at heart. Some profess themselves very easy in this respect, and they glory in this easiness as a high pitch of charity and benevolence. They hope well of all—except perhaps their personal enemies, who, for that very reason, must be very worthless and execrable creatures. Though scripture and reason do jointly declare, that men of bad lives, who habitually indulge themselves in sin, and neglect the known duties of religion and morality, are no objects of rational charity at all, but must be judged destitute of true piety by all that would judge according to evidence; "yet, God forbid, say they, that they should judge any man. They are not of a censorious spirit, but generous and benevolent in their hopes of all." They can venture to hope that the tree is good, even when the fruit is corrupt; that is, that a good man may lead a bad life. But this temper ought not to be honoured with the noble name of Charity. Let it be called ignorance, gross ignorance of the nature of true religion; or infidelity and avowed disbelief of what the scripture determines concerning the character of a good man; or let it be called indifferency, an indifferency whether men be now good or bad, and whether

they shall be happy or miserable hereafter. Where there is no love or affectionate concern, there will be no uneasy jealousy. Or let it be called a mere artifice for self-defence. Men are often cautious of condemning others, not from benevolence to them, but out of mercy to themselves, not being willing to involve themselves in the same condemnation: since they are conscious they are as bad as others, they must be sparing to others, in order to spare themselves. These are the true names of what passes current under the name of Charity in the world.

St. Paul, whose heart was capable of the kindest sentiments to mankind, could not enjoy the pleasure of this promiscuous charity. He could not thus conclude well of all, not even of all under the christian name, not of all whom he once hoped were his spiritual children; no, not of all the members of the once flourishing churches of Galatia, where he met with so friendly a reception, and had so much promising appearance of success. *I stand in doubt of you*, says he.

The state and character of these churches, we may partly learn from this epistle. A considerable number of Galatians had been converted from heathenism to christianity by St. Paul's ministry; and in the transports of their first zeal they made a very promising appearance: hence he puts them in mind that they had begun in the spirit (ch. iii. 3.); that when they first started in the christian race, they had run well (ch. v. 7.); that they had suffered many things in the cause of the gospel; (ch. iii. 4.) and as to their affection to him, it was very extraordinary. *Ye received me*, says he, *as an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ.—I bear you record, that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.* (ch. iv. 14, 15.) But alas! how naturally do the most flourishing churches tend to decay! How frail and fickle is man! How inconstant popular applause! These promising churches of Galatia soon began to decline; and their favourite, St. Paul, their apostle and spiritual father, appeared in quite another light, appeared as their enemy, because he told them the truth. There was a spurious set of preachers in

that age, who corrupted the pure gospel of Christ with Jewish mixtures. The ceremonies of the law of Moses, and the traditions of their elders, they held as of perpetual and universal obligation; and as such they imposed them even upon the christian converts from among the Gentiles, who never had any thing to do with them. Had they been recommended to their observance as indifferences or prudentials, it would not have had such bad influence upon christianity. But they continued to impose them as absolutely necessary to salvation, and represented the righteousness revealed in the gospel as insufficient without these additions. Thus they laboured to corrupt the great doctrine of a sinner's justification by faith alone, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that grand article upon which the church stands or falls, according to an old observation of Luther. These judaising teachers had artfully insinuated themselves into the Galatian churches, and spread the poison of their legal doctrines. This sunk St. Paul in the esteem of his converts, and they exchanged his pure gospel for another, more adapted to their taste. In consequence of this, religion was declining fast among them; and St. Paul is alarmed lest he should have bestowed labour in vain upon them.

This epistle is an affectionate attempt to recover them. It is for the most part argumentative; for its author was not fond of moving their passions without enlightening their understandings. But sometimes he melts into the most pathetic strains, and gives the most affecting touches to the heart. Such a tender passionate address is this in my text: *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, till Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.* What a tender, moving, paternal address is this!

My little children.—This is a fond affectionate appellation; the language of a tender father. It strongly expresses his paternal love and solicitude for the Galatians. The same style he uses to the Thessalonians—*You know, how we exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his chil-*

dren, 1 Thess. ii. 11. He may also call them his children, to imitate that he had begotten them by the gospel as spiritual children to God: or rather, as the following words suggest, he alludes to the sickness and anxiety of a mother in conception, and the pangs and agonies of child-bearing; and by these he illustrates the pangs and agonies of zeal, and the affectionate solicitude he had felt for them while Christ was forming in them under his ministry, and they were in the critical hour of the new-birth. He might well call them his children, because he had suffered all the pains of a mother for them. He adds the epithet little, *my little children,* because the fond language of a parent affects such diminutives, or perhaps to intimate their small progress in christianity. They were but little children in grace still.

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again —I have just observed this is an allusion to the painful disorders and pangs of conception and birth*; by which the apostle strongly represents the agonies of affectionate zeal, and tender anxieties he felt for the Galatians. But what rendered them doubly painful to him, was, that he was obliged to feel them more than once—*I travail of you in birth again.* He had cheerful hopes that Christ was indeed formed in them, and that they were born from above, and consequently that he should have no more occasion to feel those agonies and throes he had suffered for them. But alas! he had now reason to fear the contrary, and therefore he must again feel the same pangs and agonies: he must *travail in birth again.*

Until Christ be formed in you;—that is, until they are made new creatures after the image of Christ; until the sacred fœtus be formed in their hearts; until the heavenly embryo grow and ripen for birth, or until they be conformed to Jesus Christ in heart and practice; till then he can never be easy. Though they should retain the christian name, though they should make great proficiency in other attainments, though they should become as much attached to him as ever,

* Critics observe, that the word ὠδίνω is expressive of the sickness of conception, as well as the pangs of birth.

yet he must still feel the pangs of birth for them, till Christ be really formed in them.

I desire to be present with you now—In his absence they had been corrupted by the judaising teachers; and he hoped his presence might have some happy influence to recover them. He was impatient of the restraints of a literary correspondence, and longed to pour out all his heart to them in a free address.

I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice—When he left them, they were in a flourishing state, and therefore he took his leave of them in the warmest language of affection, approbation and confidence. "*But now* (says he) *I wish to be present with you*, that I may alter my address; that I may change my voice into more severe and alarming strains; and instead of congratulating you upon your happy state, warn you of your danger." Or his meaning may be, "I find myself obliged to use severe language with you in this epistle, which is by no means agreeable to me. I therefore desire to be present with you, that I may in person use means for your recovery, that thereupon I may change my voice, and speak to you in a soft approving strain, which is always most pleasing to me, as it would be to you. It is quite contrary to my inclination to use such chiding language to my dear little children." Or perhaps he may mean, "I desire to be present with you, that I may know the different characters of your members, and that I may be able to change my voice, and address them accordingly; that I may warn, admonish, exhort, or comfort you, as your respective cases may require. I would willingly speak comfortably to you all promiscuously, but this I cannot now do."

For I stand in doubt of you.—When I parted with you last I had great confidence in you, and hoped that you would persevere; but now I stand in doubt of you, and therefore must alter my voice to you if I were present with you. While I am thus doubtful of you, I cannot speak comfortably to you all promiscuously; but I must honestly tell you my suspicions of you, and, till there appear a change in you, I cannot change my voice into more pleasing strains.

My dear hearers, the charge is intrusted to me by the great Shepherd, for which I must give an account: you and I are too nearly concerned in this text to consider it merely as a piece of history, referring only to St. Paul and the Galatians 1700 years ago: I must bring it nearer home in a particular application. God forbid so vain and proud a thought should ever find place in my heart, as to set myself upon the footing of equality with St. Paul, the chief of the apostles. I will not tell you how much and how often I have been mortified, especially of late, at the thoughts of my vast inferiority, not only to him, but to the ordinary ministers of Christ of a lower class. You seldom hear a sermon from me but what fills me with shame and confusion in the review; and I almost cease to wonder that the gospel has so little success among you, while managed by so unskilful a hand. Yet I hope I may truly profess so much sincere affection and concern for you, as to warrant me to borrow the words of the apostle, though in a much lower sense: *My little children, of whom I travail in birth, till Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you, and to change my voice*, according to the variety of your cases; *for I am in doubt of some of you.* And I hope you are disposed to give me a serious hearing, and a serious hearing is justly expected from you; for remember, the day of death and the day of judgment will come, and that you must die, you must be judged, you must be doomed to your everlasting state.

I stand in doubt of some of you, I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy. And if there be no ground for it, you will forgive me; for if it be an error, it is the error of love. Though I was an entire stranger to you all, I might justly harbour this jealousy of some of you, upon this general principle, that there never yet was so pure a church met in one place, as not to have one insincere hypocritical professor in it. Even the apostles, the most select society that ever was formed, had a Judas among them. And can we expect more than apostolic purity in such a large promiscuous crowd as generally frequents this house? In every church there are, alas! some suspi-

cious characters; and my present design is to describe such characters, and then leave it to yourselves to judge whether there be not such among you.

Forgive me, if I suppose some of you live in the greatest neglect of family-religion. You lie down and rise up, perhaps, for weeks, months, and years, and yet never call your families together morning and evening to worship the great God who has placed you in families. If this be the character of any of you, then I must plainly tell you, I stand in doubt of you. I really doubt you have no relish for the worship of God; for if you had, how could you, as it were, excommunicate yourselves from the precious privilege of drawing near to God with your dear families, and devoting yourselves and them to him? I really doubt you have no deep affecting concern for the salvation of your domestics, nor consequently for your own, otherwise how could you neglect a duty that has so direct a natural tendency to make religious impressions upon their minds? Can any thing more naturally tend to make them sensible of their obligations. their sins, their wants, and mercies, than to hear you solemnly mention these things every day, in the presence of the great God? Your character in this is opposite to that of good men in all ages. You will find in the history of the patriarchs, particularly of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, That, wherever they had a dwelling for themselves, they had an altar for God. You find David returning from the solemnities of public worship to bless his house, 2 Sam. vi. 20. and saying, *Evening, morning, and at noon, will I pray.* Psalm lv. 17. You find Daniel praying, as he was wont, three times a day, even when the penalty was not only the loss of his place at court, but his being thrown as a prey to hungry lions. You find St. Paul saluting some of the primitive christians, *with the church that was in their house.* Rom. xvi. 5. 1 Cor. xvi. 19. Coloss. iv. 15. Philemon 2.; which is a strong intimation that they made their families little churches by celebrating the worship of God in them; for a church, without the worship of God, would be an absurd society indeed. I had almost forgotten the

example of Joshua, who bravely resolved, *That whatever others should do, he and his house would serve the Lord.* Joshua xxiv. 15. You see then, your character in this important instance is opposite to that of the saints in all ages. And have I not reason to stand in doubt of you, especially as you cannot now plead ignorance; since you have been so often instructed in your duty on this head, you may plead your incapacity or hurry of business, or that your neighbours would point at you as ostentatious Pharisees. But this is so far from clearing you, that it renders you still more suspicious. If these be the reasons of your neglect, I greatly doubt you love your reputation and the world more than the honour of God, more than his service, and more than the immortal interests of your children and servants. How would it shock you if God should authoritatively lay that restraint upon you which you voluntarily put upon yourselves? Suppose he should say, "I will allow all the families around you to worship me every day, but I lay your family under an interdict; from them I will receive no worship:" how would this shock you? And will you of your own accord take this curse upon yourselves? O! think of it, and this very evening consecrate your houses to God.

Again, I will suppose some of you generally observe the outward duties of religion: you pray in secret and in your families; you attend upon public worship; you receive the sacraments, and you sometimes fast: but generally this is but a dull round of lifeless formalities. Even a judicious christian may suspect that your whole hearts are not engaged, that the vigour of your spirits is not exerted, and that there is no spiritual life in your devotions. This man may suspect; and He who searches the heart may see it is so in fact. Now if this be your character, I must tell you, *I stand in doubt of you.* If you are really lukewarm Laodiceans, the case is quite plain: it is not a matter of doubt but of sure belief, that you are the most odious creatures upon earth to Jesus Christ. He could wish you were cold or hot, or any thing rather than what you are. And where the appearances of such forma-

lity are found, where there is a dull uniformity in all your devotions, without any signs of those divine changes which the gracious presence of God produces, your case looks very suspicious, even to men. I really stand in doubt of you; and you have great need to look to yourselves, lest the suspicion should be well grounded.

Some of you perhaps think you can easily clear yourselves from the suspicion of formality, for you have often had your hearts melted, your passions raised, and you find a great change in your dispositions in devotion: sometimes you are cold and dull, at other times all zeal and ecstacy: but notwithstanding this, there may be great reason to doubt concerning some of you. I doubt these are only warm flights of the passions, under the influence of a heated imagination, and not such rational emotions of the heart as proceed from a well-enlightened mind, that sees the nature, importance, and excellency of divine things. I fear these warm passions have no effectual tendency to make you better; that is, to subdue your favourite sins in heart and life, to make you more watchful against them, and to long and labour after universal holiness. I am afraid they have no tendency to humble you, to degrade you in your own eyes, and make you appear mean and vile to yourselves, but, on the other hand, that they tend to set you off to advantage in your own view, and to make you think highly of yourselves. I am afraid they are shallow and superficial, and never reach deep enough to transform the settled temper of the whole soul, and give it a prevailing habitual bent towards God. I am afraid, among your various exercises of heart, you have none of those humbling heart-breaking sensations which a poor believer often feels when lying helpless before God, and casting his guilty soul upon Jesus Christ. I am afraid your exercises are of a more selfish, haughty, and presumptuous kind. I am afraid of some of you, my dear people, in this respect, because this has been in fact the case of multitudes, and therefore it may be yours.

I also stand in doubt of some of you, that you

have worn off your religious impressions before they ripened to a right issue. This is a very common case in the world, and therefore it may be yours. I am afraid some of you are farther from the kingdom of God to-day than you were some months or years ago. Formerly you were serious and thoughtful, but now you are light and vain: formerly you had some clear affecting convictions of your sin and danger which made you pensive and uneasy, set you upon the use of the means of grace with unusual earnestness and diligence, and made you more watchful against sin and temptation. Had you but persevered in this course, your case would have been very hopeful; nay, you might ere now have been sincere christians, happy in the favour of God, and the joyful expectation of a blessed immortality. But alas! now you are become more thoughtless and secure, more negligent and careless, more worldly-minded, more bold and venturous as to temptation, and particularly ensnaring company; less sensible of your sin and danger, less afraid of the divine displeasure, less solicitous for a Saviour, and less affected with eternal things, I stand in doubt of you that this is the case of some of you; and if it be, it is very dismal: *the last state of that man is worse than the first.* Perhaps your religious impressions went so far, that yourselves and others too began to number you in the list of sincere converts. But alas! you have relapsed, and now your case is dismally dark; it is very doubtful whether ever you had one spark of true piety. Like the Galatians, you did once run well; but the corruptions of your own hearts, the cares of the world, the influence of bad company, and the temptations of the devil have hindered you, and made you turn back, and now you are got into the easy, slippery, descending road of apostacy; from whence, as from a precipice, your feet will ere long slide, and let you fall into the fiery gulph below. You are every day running farther and farther from God and heaven, and so much nearer to the chambers of eternal death. Your consciences, by repeated violences, will be stunned into insensibility, your hearts will harden more and more, like moistened

clay in the sun. Your corruptions are gaining the victory in repeated conflicts, will grow more strong and insolent, like veteran troops inured to war and conquest. In short, your case grows every day more and more discouraging; and I stand in doubt of you, lest you should never recover your religious impressions, nor enter into the kingdom of God.

I am also in doubt of some of you, that the world has your hearts: your thoughts seem to be engrossed by it, and your affections fixed upon it as your supreme good, and hence your mouth is full of it; for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Now if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* Covetousness is idolatry; and you know that no idolater has eternal life. I fear this is the character of some of you.

Is there not also reason to doubt of some of you, from the discoveries you give of an unchristian spirit towards mankind? You may perhaps make a specious profession of religion, and punctually attend upon divine ordinances; but do you not discover insufferable pride, and unchristian resentment, and an unforgiving spirit under injuries, a disposition to overreach and take the advantage in your dealings? Such a temper, when predominant, is utterly inconsistent with the spirit of christianity, and proves you entirely destitute of it; and the appearances of the prevalence of such a temper render your case very suspicious.

Let me add farther, * Suppose that in this day of blood and slaughter, when the Lord of Hosts calls you to weeping, and mourning, and girding with sackcloth; when the wounds of your bleeding country, and the streams of blood that are running by sea and land call for your sorrowful sympathy; when your everlasting state stands in a dreadful suspense, and you know not whether heaven or hell will be your residence, if you should die this night; or when the evidence lies against you, and you have good proof, that you are utterly unprepared for eternity in your present condition, when the spirit of God seems withdrawn from us; and consequently but few are pressing into the kingdom of God,

* This Sermon is dated Hanover, Jan. 8, 1758.

and general languor and inefficacy run through the ministrations of the gospel; when your conduct may encourage others to run into extravagancies, and forget God and their souls, as well as throw yourselves causelessly into the way of temptation, and cherish that levity of mind which directly tends to wear off your religious impressions; when at a time in which you pretend to commemorate the birth of the holy Jesus, who came to destroy the works of the devil and the flesh, and particularly revellings, and to make you sober and watchful to prayer, and to shun all appearances of evil; when in your transition from the old year to the new, in which you may die, and never see the close of it: and when one would think it would better become you solemnly to recollect how you have spent the year past, and devote yourselves to God for the future with new vows and resolutions;—Suppose, I say, that at such a time, and in such circumstances, you indulge yourselves in feasting and carousing, that perhaps you prosecute and chace the diversion from house to house, in order to prolong it, and guard against the returns of serious, retired and thoughtful hours; as if laughing, dancing, and frolic, were proper expressions of gratitude for the birth of a Saviour, and as if there was nothing in time or eternity of sufficient moment to make you serious, and check your growing levity—What shall I say of such a practice? The mildest thing I can say is, that I stand in doubt of you, who promote or willingly tolerate, or join in such entertainments. I have no business at present to determine whether music, dancing, and feasting be lawful in themselves. Granting them to be as lawful as you could wish, I am sure that, at such a time and in the circumstances that generally attend them, they are utterly unlawful to every christian, and have a natural tendency to banish all serious religion from among us. You are but little acquainted with me if you think I say this as a sour ascetic, or an enemy to the lawful pleasures of mankind, or that I place religion in morose, mopish, melancholy austerities. Such of you as are acquainted with me must know the contrary. But after all I must declare, I shall have very little hopes of the success of the gospel among you, if once I should have a congre-

gation of dancing frolicking christians. Alas! they are not like to dance and frolic themselves into heaven.— It is with great reluctance I touch upon such a subject, though with a gentle hand; but duty commands, and I must obey: and I wish the admonition may be so effectual, as to prevent all occasion to repeat it in time to come.

Thus I have delineated sundry dubious characters, and now I leave you to judge whether there be not many such among you. Examine yourselves thoroughly, that you may have the judgment of God in your favour; for by that you must stand or fall.

Some of you perhaps may think it strange I have omitted so many characters that are frequent among us. I have said nothing of the profane sinner, the drunkard, the swearer, the whoremonger, the thief, the knave confessed: I have said nothing of the infidel and scoffer, who affect to disbelieve the religion of Jesus, and relapse into heathenism; and who openly make a mock of things sacred; I have said nothing of the careless creature, who lives in the general neglect of even the forms of religion: I have said nothing of the stupid thoughtless creature, who never troubles his head, as he may effect to speak, about religion; and whose heart has hardly ever received any impressions from it; but who lives like a brute, merely for the purposes of the present life: I have said nothing of such as these, because they do not come under the class of doubtful characters: I have no doubt at all about such: I am sure they are utterly destitute of all true religion, and must perish for ever, if they continue in their present condition. If you would know how I come to be sure as to them, I answer, Because I believe my reason and my Bible; for both put the character and the doom of such beyond all doubt. Common sense is sufficient to convince me that such are unholy impenitent sinners; and I am sure, both from reason and revelation, that an unholy impenitent sinner, while such, can never enter into the kingdom of heaven. Let such as harbour a wider charity for them, point out the grounds of it. Indeed there is one thing lamentably doubtful as to such; it is very doubtful whether ever their present condition will be changed for the better. The most promising period of

life is over with them; and even in that period they continued impenitent under all the means of grace they enjoyed; and is it not more likely that they will continue so in time to come? O! that they would take the alarm, and lay their danger to heart in time, that they may use proper means for their deliverance!

Nothing can turn the full evidence against them in their favour, and nothing can render the doubtful case of the former class clear and satisfactory, but the formation of Christ within them. This alone can put it beyond all doubt that they are christians indeed, and prove their sure title to everlasting happiness. This shall be the subject of the remainder of this discourse.

Here you would ask me, I suppose, what it is to have Christ formed within us?

I have already told you briefly, that it signifies our being made conformable to him in heart and life, or having his holy image stamped upon our hearts. This is essential to the character of every true christian. *Christ dwells in the heart of such by faith*, Eph. iii. 17.; *and if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his*. Rom. viii. 9. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked*, saith St. John, 1 John, ii. 6. *Let the same mind be in you*, saith St. Paul, *which was also in Christ Jesus*. Phil. ii. 5. *Whom he foreknew, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son*. Rom. viii. 29. The temper of a christian has such a resemblance to Christ's, that it may be called Christ in embryo, spiritually formed within us. It is indeed infinitely short of the all-perfect Original, but yet it is a prevailing temper, and habitually the governing principle of the soul. That filial temper towards God, that humble veneration and submission, that ardent devotion, that strict regard to all the duties of religion, that self-denial, humility, meekness, and patience, that heavenly-mindedness and noble superiority to the world, that generous charity, benevolence and mercy to mankind, that ardent zeal and diligence to do good, that temperance and sobriety which shone in the blessed Jesus with a divine incomparable splendor; these and the like graces and virtues shine, though with feebler rays, in all his followers. They have their infirmi-

ties indeed, many and great infirmities; but not such as are inconsistent with the habitual prevalency of this Christ-like disposition. You may make what excuses you please, but this is an eternal truth, that unless you have a real resemblance to the holy Jesus, you are not his genuine disciples. Pray examine critically into this point. Have you a right to take your name Christian from Christ, by reason of your conformity to him?

Again, If Christ be formed in your hearts, he lives there. The heavenly embryo is not yet complete, not yet ripe for birth into the heavenly world, but it is quickened. I mean, those virtues and graces above mentioned are not dead inactive principles within you, but they operate, they shew themselves alive by action, they are the governing principles of your practice. You are not like him in heart, unless you are like him in life too; and if your life be conformed to his, it will plainly distinguish you from the world, while it continues so wicked. If you are like to him, you will certainly be very unlike to the generality of mankind; and they will acknowledge the difference, and point you out, and hate you, as not belonging to them. They will stare at you, as an odd unfashionable stranger, and wonder you do not copy their example.

If ye were of the world, says Christ, *the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* John xv. 19.

I hope you now know what it is to have Christ formed within you? And in what heart among you is this holy thing conceived and growing? Where are the followers of Jesus? Surely they are not so like the men of the world, the followers of sin and Satan, as to be undistinguishable. O! how many impostors does this inquiry discover, false pretenders to christianity, who are the very reverse of its great Founder! And as many of you as continue unlike to him now in holiness, must continue unlike to him for ever in happiness. All Christ's heavenly companions are Christ-like; they bear his image and superscription.

Before I dismiss this head I must observe, that the production of this divine infant, if I may so call it, in

the heart, is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not the growth of nature, but a creation by divine power. It is the hand of God that draws the lineaments of this image upon the heart, though he makes use of the gospel and a variety of means as his pencil.

But you would inquire farther, "In what manner does this divine agent work, or how is Christ formed in the hearts of his people?"

I answer, The heart of man has a quick sensation. Nothing can be done there without its perceiving it, much less can Christ be formed there, while it is wholly insensible of the operation. There is indeed a great variety in the circumstances, but the substance of the work is the same in all adults. Therefore, if ever you have been the subjects of it, you have been sensible of the following particulars.

1. You have been made deeply sensible of your being intirely destitute of this divine image. Your hearts have appeared to you as a huge shapeless mass of corruption, without one ingredient of true goodness, amidst all the flattering appearances of it. In confidence of this discovery your high conceit of yourselves was mortified, your airs of pride and self-consequence lowered, and you saw yourselves utterly unfit for heaven, that region of purity, and ready to fall, as it were, by your own weight into hell; that sink of all the pollutions of the moral world, This is the first step towards the formation of Christ in the soul. And have you ever gone thus far? If not, you may be sure you have never gone farther.

2. You have hereupon set yourselves in earnest to the use of the means appointed for the renovation of your nature. Prayer, hearing the gospel, and other divine ordinances, were no more lifeless customary formalities to you; but you exerted all the vigour of your souls in them. You also guarded against every thing that tended to cherish your depraved disposition, and hinder the formation of Christ within you. Then you durst not play with temptation, nor venture within its reach. This is the second step in the process. And have you ever gone thus far? If not, you have never gone farther; and if you have never gone farther, you

can never reach the kingdom of God in your present condition.

3. You have been made sensible of your own weakness, and the inefficacy of all the means you could use to produce the divine image upon your hearts; and that nothing but the divine hand could draw it there. When you first begun your endeavours you had high hopes you would do great things; but, after hard strivings and strugglings, after many prayers and tears, after much reading, hearing, and meditation, you found no great effect followed; nay, the corruption of your heart appeared more and more, and hence you concluded you were growing worse and worse. Thus the blessed Spirit convinced you of your own weakness, and the necessity of his influence to work this divine change. He cleared away the rubbish of pride and self-righteousness from your hearts, in order to prepare them as a clean canvas to receive the image of Christ. And have you ever been thus humbled and mortified? Have you ever been reduced into this medicinal self-despair? It is the humble heart alone that is susceptive of the image of the meek and lowly Jesus. Pride can never receive its lineaments, nor can it be carved on an insensible stone.

4. Hereupon the Holy Spirit enlightened your minds to view the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and of the method of salvation revealed in the gospel. The bright beams of the divine perfections shining in that way of salvation, the attractive beauties of holiness, and all the wonders of the gospel, struck your minds with delightful astonishment; and you viewed them in a light unknown before. Hereupon you were enabled to cast your guilty, corrupt, helples souls upon Jesus Christ, whom you saw to be a glorious all-sufficient Saviour; and with all your hearts you embraced the way of salvation through his mediation. The view of his glory proved transformative: while you were contemplating the object, you received its likeness: the rays of glory beaming upon you, as it were, rendered your hearts transparent, and the beauties of holiness were stamped upon them. Thus St. Paul represents the matter, *We all with open face beholding, as in a glass,*

the glory of the Lord in the gospel, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Thus your hearts retained the image of his glory, like the face of Moses after he had been conversing with God in the mount. You contracted the temper of Jesus Christ, and imbibed his spirit: he was formed in your hearts, and began to live and act there. The life you lived in the flesh, you lived by the faith of the Son of God. Now your minds took a new turn, and your life a new cast; and the difference began to appear even to the world. Not knowing the divine original, they knew not whose image you bore. *Therefore the world knoweth us not*, saith St. John, *because it knew him not*. 1 John iii. 1. This however they knew, that you did not resemble them; therefore they looked upon you as odd sort of creatures, whose tempers and manners were as different from theirs as if you were foreigners: you soon became as speckled birds among them, and they were weary of your society, and you of theirs. Brethren, have you ever been the subjects of this divine operation? Has Christ ever been thus formed in your hearts? I stand in doubt of some of you, though blessed be God! there are others who give good grounds for a charitable hope concerning them, by their apparent likeness to Christ.

5. If Christ has ever been formed in you, it is your persevering endeavour to improve and perfect this divine image. You long and labour to be fully conformed to him, and, as it were, to catch his air, his manner, and spirit, in every thought, in every word, and in every action. As far as you are unlike to him, so far you appear deformed and loathsome to yourselves. While you feel an unchristian spirit prevail within you, you seem as if you were possessed with the devil. And it is the labour of your life to subdue such a spirit, and to brighten and finish the features of the divine image within you, by repeated touches and retouches.

By this short view, my brethren, you may be assisted in determining whose image you bear; whether Christ's or Satan's, whether Christ's or the world's, whether Christ's or your own. And let me tell you, if you cannot determine this, you know not but you

may be in hell the next hour; for none shall ever find admittance into heaven who are not formed after the image of Christ. The glorious company upon mount Sion are all followers of the Lamb: they are like him, for they see him as he is. A soul unlike to him would be a monster there; a native of hell broke into heaven; a wolf among lambs; a devil among angels. And can you hope for admission there while you are unlike him? The two grand apartments of the eternal world are under two opposite heads; the holy Jesus presides in the one,—and the Prince of Devils, the prime offender and father of sin, in the other. Both apartments are thick settled with colonies from our world; and the inhabitants of both are like their respective heads. Therefore, if ye resemble the Prince of Heaven, with him you shall dwell for ever; but if you resemble the tyrant of hell, you must for ever be his miserable vassals. Therefore push home the inquiry, is Christ formed in my heart, or is he not?

If he be, then rejoice in it, as a sure earnest of the heavenly inheritance. None ever went to hell that carried the image of Christ upon their hearts; but the heavenly regions are peopled with such. His image is the grand passport into that country, a passport that was never disputed; and, if you bear it, the celestial gates will be flung wide open for your reception, and your human and angelic brethren, who have the same looks, the same manner, the same spirit, will all hail your arrival, and shout your welcome; will own you as their kindred, from your visible resemblance to them; and you will immediately and naturally commence a familiarity with them, from the conformity of your dispositions. The Father of all will also own the dear image of his Son, and the blessed Jesus will acknowledge his own image, and confess the relation. Blessed moment! when wilt thou arrive, when all the followers of the Lamb shall appear upon mount Sion, in his full likeness, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing? When no stranger of another countenance and another spirit shall mingle among them, but all be cast in the same mould, and all be clothed in uniform, with the beauties of holiness, and the robes of salvation! O!

my brethren, must not your eager hearts spring forward to meet that day!

But amid all the joy which that transporting prospect affords, it must humble you to think that though Christ be really formed in your hearts, it is but very imperfectly, as an unfinished embryo. His image as yet is but very faint; you still carry the traces of some infernal features about you. Let this consideration constrain you to put yourselves daily under the operation of the blessed Spirit, till he finish the heavenly picture by repeated touches, and diligently attend upon all the means which he is pleased to use as his pencil. Guard against every thing that may deform the divine draught, or delay its perfection. Go on in this way, and the glorious picture will daily catch more and more the likeness of the divine original, and soon come to complete perfection.

But I must speak a concluding word to such of you in whom Christ has never yet been formed. Pray turn your eyes upon yourselves, and survey your own deformity. Do not you see the image of the Devil upon you? Have you not forgotten God, and refused to love him, like a devil? Have you not loved and practised sin like a devil? or have you not wallowed in sensual pleasures, and confined all your concern to the present life, like a beast, and thus made yourselves the most horrid monsters, half beast, half devil? And can you love yourselves while this is your character? Can you flatter yourselves such can be admitted into heaven?

Since it is possible your deformed spirits may yet receive the image of Christ, will you not use all possible means for that purpose while there is hope? This day begin the attempt, resolve and labour to become new men in this new year.

But, alas! exhortation is but feeble breath, that vanishes into air between my lips and your ears; something is wanting to give it force and efficacy. We have the gospel, we have preaching, we have all the means of salvation; but something is wanting to give them life, to make them efficacious, and bear them home upon the hearts of sinners with that almighty

energy which they have sometimes had. Something, alas! is wanting for this purpose: and what is it? It is Thou, Eternal Spirit! Thou, the Author of all good in the hearts of the children of men; thou, the only former of Christ within; thou art absent, and without thee neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth; they are all nothing together. Come, thou life of souls! thou spirit of the gospel! thou quickener of ordinances! thou assistant of poor ministers! thou opener of their hearers hearts! Come visit this congregation. Come to-day: O! come this moment! and Christ shall be formed in us, the hope and the earnest of glory!

SERMON XLVI.

The wonderful Compassions of Christ to the greatest Sinners.

MATT. xxiii. 37.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

THERE is not perhaps a chapter in the whole Bible so full of such repeated denunciations of the most tremendous woes as this. Certainly there is none like it among all the discourses of Christ left upon record. Here the gentle Jesus, the inoffensive Lamb of God, treats the unbelieving Scribes and Pharisees with the most pungent severity. Woe, woe, woe, breaks from his lips, like repeated claps of thunder. He exposes them with an asperity and indignation not usual in his mild addresses. He repeatedly calls them hypocrites, fools, and blind, blind guides, whited sepulchres, children of hell, serpents, a generation of vipers, who could not escape the damnation of hell. But in my text he melts into tenderness, even in this vein of terror, and appears the same compassionate gentle Saviour we are wont to find him. His most terrible denunciations were friendly warnings, calculated to reform, and not to destroy. And while denouncing the most terrible woes against Jerusalem, in an abrupt flow of passion, he breaks out into the most moving lamentation over her; *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

This is one of those tender cases which requires a familiar and moving, rather than a grand illustration;

and that which Jesus has here chosen is one of the most tender, familiar, and moving that could be devised. *How often would I have gathered thee, O Jerusalem, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.* As much as to say, "As the parent-bird, when she sees some bird of prey hovering over her helpless young, gives them the signal, which Nature teaches them to understand, and spreads her wings to protect them, resolved to become a prey herself rather than her tender brood; or, as she shelters them from the rain and cold, and cherishes them under her friendly feathers, so says the compassionate Redeemer; so, O Jerusalem, I see thy children, like heedless chickens, in the most imminent danger; I see the judgments of God hovering over them; I see the Roman Eagle ready to seize them as its prey; I see storms of vengeance ready to fall upon them; and how often have I invited them to fly to me for shelter, and give them the signal of their danger! how often have I spread the wings of my protection to cover them, and keep them warm and safe as in my bosom? But, O! lamentable! O! astonishing! ye would not! I was willing, but ye would not! The silly chickens, taught by Nature, understand the signal of approaching danger, and immediately fly for shelter; but ye, more silly and presumptuous, would not regard my warnings: would not believe your danger, nor fly to me for protection, though often, O how often warned and invited!"

His compassion will appear the more surprizing if we consider the object of it. "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee, though upon the kind design of reforming and saving thee, and who wilt, in a few days, crucify that Saviour who now laments thy doom, how often would he have gathered even thy ungrateful children and received them under his protection, with an affection and tenderness, like the instinctive fondness and solicitude of the mother-hen for her brood! Here is divine compassion indeed, that extends itself even to his enemies, to his murderers! Strange! that such generous benevolence should meet with an un-

grateful repulse! that the provoked Sovereign should be willing to receive his rebellious subjects into protection, but that they should be unwilling to fly to him for it!"

The important truths which my text suggests are such as these: That sinners, while from under the protection of Jesus Christ, are in a very dangerous situation—That they may obtain safety by putting themselves under his protection—That he is willing to receive the greatest sinners under his protection—That he has often used means to prevail upon them to fly to him, that they may be safe—That, notwithstanding all this, multitudes are unwilling to fly to him, and put themselves under his protection—That this unwillingness of theirs is the real cause of their destruction—That this unwillingnes is an instance of the most irrational and brutal stupidity—And that it is very affecting and lamentable.

1. The text implies, that sinners, while from under the protection of Jesus Christ are in a very dangerous situation. As the hen does not give the signal of danger, nor spread her wings to shelter her young, except when she sees danger approaching, so the Lord Jesus would not call sinners to fly to him for protection, were they not in real danger. Sinners, you are in danger from the curse of the divine law, which is in full force against you, while you have no interest in the righteousness of Christ, which alone can answer its demands: You are in danger from the dread arrest of divine justice, which guards the sacred rights of the divine government, and will avenge itself upon you for all the insults you have offered it: You are in danger from the various judgments of God, who is angry with you every day, and whose judgments are hovering over you, and ready to seize you, like hungry birds of prey: You are in danger from your own vile corruptions, which may hurry you into such courses as may be inconvenient, or perhaps ruinous to you in this world, may harden you in impenitence, and at length destroy you for ever: You are in danger from your own conscience, which would be your best friend; but it is now ready to rise up in arms against you, and, like

an insatiable vulture, prey upon your hearts for ever: You are in danger from the arrest of death, which is ready every moment to stretch out its mortal hand, and seize you: You are in danger from the malice and power of devils, who, like hungry lions, are ready to snatch away your souls, as their helpless prey. In short, you are surrounded with dangers on every hand, and dangers rise still more thick and dreadful before you. You are not sure of an hour's enjoyment of one comfort; nay, you are not sure there is so much as one moment betwixt you and all the miseries of the damned. This minute you are upon earth, thoughtless, secure and gay; but the next may be—I tremble to tell you where—in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, tormented in flames. Yes, sinners, one flying moment may strip you entirely naked of all the enjoyments of earth, cut you off from all hope of heaven, and ingulph you in remediless despair. Some of you, whose very case this is, will not probably believe me, nor take the alarm. But here, alas! lies your principal danger. If you would take warning in time, you might escape; but you will not believe there is danger till it becomes inevitable. Had Lot's sons-in-law taken warning from him, they might have escaped; but they saw no sensible appearances of the impending judgment, and therefore they continued blindly secure, regarded the good old man as a mocker, and therefore perished in Sodom. Had Jerusalem been apprehensive of its danger in time, it might have flourished to this day; but it would not be warned, and therefore became a ruinous heap: and this will be your doom, sinners, unless you be apprehensive of it before it breaks upon you like a whirlwind. Indeed it may make one sad to think how common this danger is, and how little it is apprehended, to see crowds thoughtless and merry on the brink of ruin! secure and careless, while hanging over the infernal pit by the frail thread of life. This is sad; but alas! it is a common case in the world, and I am afraid it is too common among you, my hearers. And whither shall you fly for safety? Is the danger inevitable? If so, where is the friendly arm that can guard you? where the wing

that can shelter you from those judgments that are hovering over you, like ravenous birds, to make a prey of you? Blessed be God I can shew you a place of safety; for,

2. The text implies, that if sinners fly to Christ, and put themselves under his protection, they shall obtain safety.

The beautiful allusion to the protection a hen affords her young under the shelter of her wings, implies thus much, as we may learn from the meaning of the same allusion in other places. So in that beautiful passage, Psalm xci. 1—4. *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge, and my fortress—Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler—He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust;* that is, he shall protect thee in safety, and thou shalt trust in his guardian care. This is David's meaning, when he prays, *Lord hide me under the shadow of thy wings.* Psalm xvii. 8. And when he resolves, *yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be over-past;* just as the hen's helpless brood hide under her wings till the storm be blown over, or the bird of prey has disappeared. Psalm lvii. 1. *I will trust,* says he, *in the covert of thy wings.* Psalm lxi. 4. *Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.* Psalm lxiii. 7*.

How great and seemingly inevitable your dangers; yet, if you place yourselves under the protection of Jesus Christ, you are safe for ever: safe from the deluges of divine wrath that are ready to rush down upon you; safe from the sword of justice, and the thunders of Sinai! safe from the intestine insurrections of your own conscience, and from the power and malice of infernal spirits; safe from the oppression of sin, and you shall be gloriously triumphant over death itself, the king of terrors. These may disturb and

* See the same metaphor, used in much the same sense in Psal. xxxvi. 7. Exod. xix. 4. Deut. xxxii. 11. though in the two last places it includes conduct as well as protection.

alarm you, they may give you a slight wound, and put you in great terror; but none of them can do you a lasting remediless injury; nay, the very injuries you may receive from them in this life, will, in the issue, turn out to your advantage, and become real blessings to you. If ye are Christ's, then, saith the apostle, *all things are yours, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours.* 1 Cor. iii. 21.; that is, you have a kind of property in all things that you have any connection with, so that they shall work together for your good, as if they were all your own by a private right. Brethren, if we are covered with the righteousness of Christ, the sword of divine justice cannot reach us. All its demands are answered, and justice itself becomes our friend. If we are sheltered under the wings of his guardian care, the most threatening dangers of time or eternity cannot affect us with real injury. How happy then, how safe are such of you as have put yourselves under his protection! Now every blessing is yours, and nothing can do you a real injury. You shall never fall a prey to your various enemies, but shall at length obtain an illustrious victory over them all, through the blood of the Lamb. To you I may apply those sublime words of Moses, *As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone does and will lead you*, Deut. xxxii. 11, 12. defend you, cherish you, and bear you along to your eternal home. You have therefore reason, with David, amidst all the peculiar dangers of his life, to rejoice under the shadow of his wings. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, and you have fled to it, and are safe. Amidst all your fears and terrors, have you not some secure and delightful hours, when you, as it were, feel yourselves gathered under the wings of your Redeemer? In such hours do not even such weaklings as you dare to brave all your enemies, and bid defiance to earth and hell? O how happy, how secure is your situation!

But here a grand question rises in the minds of some of you, "How may I know whether I have fled to Jesus for protection? How may I know whether I have

placed myself under his guardian wings?" This is a question of the utmost importance; and I must offer a word or two in answer to it. Observe then, if ever you have fled to Jesus for safety, you have been made deeply sensible of your danger. If ever you have sought shelter under his wings, you have seen your sins, the curses of the law, and the powers of hell, as it were, hovering over you, and ready to seize and devour you as their prey. You have also been made deeply sensible that Jesus alone was able to save you. You found you could not shelter yourselves under the covert of your own righteousness, and were constrained to give up all hopes of saving yourselves by any thing you could do in your own strength. Hereupon, as perishing helpless creatures, you have cast yourselves entirely upon the protection of Jesus Christ, and put your souls into his hands, to be saved by him in his own way: and you have also submitted freely to his authority, willing to be ruled and disposed of entirely according to his pleasure. These few things must suffice to determine this grand enquiry: and I hope you will make use of them for that purpose: if they help you to discover that you have fled to Jesus for refuge, rejoice in your happy lot, and let your mouths be filled with praise. But alas! are there not some of you that have made the contrary discovery, and consequently, that you are exposed to all the dreadful dangers of a sinner without Christ? And is there no place of safety for you? Yes, under those wings where believers have sheltered themselves. In Jesus Christ there is safety, if you fly to him: but you may perhaps enquire, "What encouragement have I to fly to him: I, who am so vile a sinner; I, who have nothing at all to recommend me! Can I hope that he will stretch out the wings of his mercy, and receive me into protection?" Yes, poor trembling creature, even you may venture; for remember what my text farther implies, viz.

III. That the compassionate Jesus is willing to receive the very greatest sinner under his protection. Can you question this after this moving lamentation of his over Jerusalem! Jerusalem, that killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto her, though

upon messages of grace; Jerusalem, upon whom should come all the righteous blood of the prophets, through a length of near 4000 years, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias; Jerusalem, the den of those murderers, who, he well knew, would in a few days imbrue their hands in his own blood; Jerusalem, that had abused so many mercies, been incorrigible under so many chastisements, deaf to so many invitations; yet, of this very city, the compassionate Saviour says, *How often would I have gathered my children* under the wings of my protection; thy children, obstinate and ungrateful as they are! O what gracious encouragement is here to the greatest sinners among us! Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; the same compassionate all-sufficient Saviour. He did not lose his pity for Jerusalem after he had suffered death by her bloody hands; but after his resurrection he orders his apostles to make one trial more with her obstinate children: *Go,* says he, *and preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem,* Luke xxiv. 41.; as much as to say, "Though Jerusalem be the ungrateful city, where so much pains have been taken in vain, and where I have just been crucified with cruel hands, yet do not give them up; try once more to gather them under my wings; yea, let them have the very first offer of grace under this new dispensation; make the first offer of pardon through my blood to the wretches that shed my blood; invite them to me as a Saviour, who nailed me to the cross as a malefactor and a slave." O what melting overpowering mercy! What overflowing and free grace are here! This exemplifies his own declaration, that *he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;* and sinners of the vilest characters are welcome to him. He took care, at the first introduction of the gospel, to select some of the most daring sinners, and make them the monuments of his grace to all ages, that their history might give the strongest assurance of his grace to sinners of the like character, from that time to the end of the world. Such an instance was the famous St. Paul. *This is a faithful saying,* says he; a saying that may be depended

upon, *and worthy of all acceptation;* worthy to be received as true, and embraced with joy by all the sons of men, *that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of which I am the chief.* 1 Tim. i. 15. This chieftian, this king of sinners, was made a happy subject of Jesus Christ. And *for this cause*, says he, *I obtained mercy, that in me first, or in me the chief*, Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him.* Blessed be God, there are many such instances now in heaven, in the glorious company of angels! "There, as one observes, is murderous and idolatrous Manasseh among the true worshippers of God; there is oppressing Zaccheus among the spirits of just men made perfect; there is Mary Magdalen, possessed by seven devils, among the saints of the Most High, filled with the Holy Spirit of God. In a word, there are the betrayers and murderers of our blessed Lord and Saviour, receiving eternal life and happiness from that precious blood, which their own guilty hands did shed †." And what farther arguments need I produce

* The same word in the same sense is thus translated two or three words before—ὧν [scil. ἁμαρτωλῶν] πρῶτός εἰμι ἐγω—and then follows—ἐν ἐμοὶ πρώτῳ, 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.

† Dr. Grosvenor, in a Sermon intitled, "The Temper of Jesus Christ towards his Enemies, and his Grace to the chief of Sinners, in his commanding the Gospel to begin at Jerusalem," has the following very lively and striking passage:—"It is very affecting that the first offers of grace should be made to those who, of all people in the world, had done it the most despite! That the heavenly gift should be tendered to those first who least deserved it: not that any can deserve it at all, for then it were not grace; but they of all people had most deserved the contrary! That they, who had abused Christ to a degree beyond the most pitiful description, should yet lie uppermost in his care, and stand foremost in his pity, and find so much mercy from one to whom they shewed none at all!

"One would rather have expected the apostles should have received another kind of charge, and that Christ should have said, Let repentance and remission of sins be preached, but carry it not to Jerusalem, that wicked city, that has been the slaughter-house of my prophets, whom I have often sent. After them I sent John the Baptist, a burning and a shining light; him they killed in prison. Last of all, I myself, the Son, came also: and me, with wicked hands, they have crucified and slain. They may do the same by you; the disciple is not like to be better (treated) than his Lord: let not the gospel enter those gates, through which they led me, its author, to crucifixion.

of the willingness of Jesus Christ to receive the vilest sinner among you, upon your coming to him? I might

"I have been preaching there myself these three years, I have mingled my tears with my sermons, I have supported my pretensions and character from the scriptures of Moses and the prophets, I have confirmed them by divine miracles, and sealed all with my blood, yet they would not give ear: *O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!* all that I have left for thee now is, what I have before dropt over thee, viz. a compassionate tear and wish, *that thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belonged to thy peace! but now they are hid from thy eyes*; and so let them remain; for I charge you, my apostles, to *preach repentance and remission of sins* to all other nations, but come not near that wicked city.

"But God's thoughts are not as ours, neither are his ways as our ways: but as far as the heavens are above the earth, so are his thoughts and ways above ours. Our way is, to make the chief offenders examples of justice, to avenge ourselves upon those who have done us personal injury and wrong; but Christ chooses out these to make examples of mercy, and commands the first offer of eternal life to be made to them, and all the world are to wait till they have had the first refusal of the gospel-salvation.

"As if our Lord had said, It is true my sufferings are an universal remedy, and I have given my life a ransom for many, that the Gentiles afar off might be brought nigh, and all the ends of the earth might see the salvation of God, and therefore *go into all nations* and offer this salvation as you go; but, lest the poor house of Israel should think themselves abandoned to despair, the seed of Abraham, mine ancient friend, as cruel and unkind as they have been, go, make them the first offer of grace, let them have the first refusal of gospel-mercy: let them that struck the rock, drink first of its refreshing streams; and they that drew my blood, be welcome to its healing virtue.

"Tell them, that as I was sent to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, so, if they will be gathered, I will be their Shepherd still. Though they despised my tears, which I shed over them, and imprecated my blood to be upon them, tell them it was for their sakes I shed both, that by my tears I might soften their hearts towards God, and by my blood I might reconcile God to them.

"Tell them I live; and because I am alive again, my death shall not be their damnation; nor is my murder an unpardonable sin, but that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin, even the sin by which that blood was drawn.

"Tell them, you have seen the prints of the nails upon my hands and feet, and the wound of the spear in my side, and that those marks of their cruelty are so far from giving me vindictive thoughts, that every wound they have given me speaks in their behalf, pleads with the Father for remission of their sins, and enables me to bestow it; and by those sufferings which they may be ready to think have exasperated me against them, by those very wounds, court and persuade them to receive the salvation they have procured.

"Nay, if you meet that poor wretch that thrust the spear into my side, tell him, there is another way, a better way of coming to my

prove the same joyful truth from his repeated declarations, from his indefinite invitations, and especially from that kind assurance which has kept many a soul from sinking: *him that cometh unto me I will in no-wise cast out.* John vi. 37. But this argument from matters of fact is sufficient. Therefore come, sinners, fly to Jesus, however deep your guilt. Had you been murderers of fathers, or murderers of mothers; nay, had you come hither this day with hands reeking in the blood of the Son of God, yet, if you repent and believe, he is willing to receive you under the shadow of his wings. I may therefore invite you in the language of the following lines*:

Outcasts of men, to you I call,
Harlots, and publicans, and thieves;
He spreads his arms t'embrace you all;
Sinners alone his grace receives.
Come, all ye Magdalens in lust:
Ye ruffians fell, in murders old,
Repent and live; despair and trust!
Jesus for you to death was sold.
Come, O my guilty brethren, come,
Groaning beneath your load of sin!
His bleeding heart shall make you room,
His wounded side shall take you in.
He calls you all, invites you home:
Come, O my guilty brethren, come!

To encourage you the more, and even to constrain you, consider what my text implies farther, viz.

heart, even my heart's love, if he will repent, *and look upon him whom he has pierced,* and will mourn, I will cherish him in that very bosom he has wounded; he shall find the blood he shed an ample atonement for the sin of shedding it. And tell him from me, he will put me to more pain and displeasure by refusing this offer of my blood, than when he first drew it forth. In short,

"Though they have gainsayed my doctrine, blasphemed my divinity, and abused and tormented my person, taken away my life, and, what is next valuable to every honest man, endeavoured to murder my reputation too, by making me an imposter, and imputing my miracles to a combination with Beelzebub; however, go to Jerusalem, and by beginning there, shew them such a miracle of goodness and grace, that they themselves must confess too good for the Devil to have any hand in, too God-like for him to be assisting to; that may convince them of their sin, and at the same time, that nothing can be greater than their sin, except this mercy and grace of mine, which, where their sin has abounded does thus much more abound, beginning at Jerusalem."

* Mr. Wesley.

4. That the Lord Jesus has often used means to prevail upon you to fly to him for safety. What he says to Jerusalem may be applied to you: *how often would I have gathered thy children together!* How often has he given you the signal of danger, that you might fly from it! how often has he spread out a friendly wing to shelter you! as often as the law has denounced his curses against you; as often as the gospel has invited and allured you; as often as conscience has checked and warned you, or prompted you to your duty; as often as the Holy Spirit has moved upon your hearts, and excited some serious thoughts and good purposes and inclinations; as often as providence has allured you with its profusion of blessings or chastened you with its afflictive rod; as often as you have seen a good example, or heard a pious word dropt in conversation; in short, as often as any means of any kind have been used with you, that had a tendency to make you sensible of your danger, or your need of Jesus Christ, so often has he used means with you to engage you to fly to the shelter of his wings for protection. O! how frequently, and by what a great variety of means, has he called you in this congregation! This is the very business of one day in seven, when you are called away from the noise and bustle of the world to listen to the voice of his invitation. But this is not the only time when he calls you. While you are at home, or following your business through the rest of the week, you have a Bible, a Providence, a conscience, and the Holy Spirit, still with you; and these are still urging you to fly to Jesus, though their voice may be disregarded, and lost in the din and confusion of the world around you. The gracious call of a compassionate Saviour has followed you ever since you were capable of hearing it to this day. But alas! does not the next remark hold true as to some of you, viz.

5. That notwithstanding all this, multitudes are unwilling to fly to him for protection! It was not of Jerusalem alone that he had reason to say, *I would have gathered you, but ye would not!* I was willing, but ye were unwilling. This is strange indeed, and might

seem incredible, were it not a most notorious fact. That the Judge should be willing to pardon, but the criminal unwilling to receive a pardon—that the offended Sovereign should be ready to take a perishing rebel under his protection, but the rebel should stand off, and rather perish than fly to him—this is a most astonishing thing; and it is the hardest thing in the world to convince sinners that this is their conduct towards the Lord Jesus. They are generally more suspicious of his willingness to save them, than of their own to come to him. Were he but as willing to save them as they are to be saved by him, they think there would be no danger of their salvation; but the case is directly the reverse; the unwillingness lies entirely upon their side. To convince them of this, let it be considered, that we are not truly willing to be saved by Christ at all, unless we are willing to be saved by him in his own way, or upon his own terms. We are not willing to be saved, unless the nature of the salvation offered be agreeable to us. Now one principal part of the salvation which we need, and which Christ offers, is deliverance from sin; deliverance from the power, the pleasures, the profits of sin, as well as from the destructive consequences of it in the world to come. And are sinners willing to accept of such a salvation as this from Christ? No, this appears no salvation to them; this seems rather a confinement, a loss, a bereavement. They are willing to indulge themselves in sin, and therefore it is impossible they should, in the mean time, be willing to be restrained from it, or deprived of it. This is the thing they struggle against, and to which all the means used with them cannot bring them. To tear their sins from them is to rob them of their pleasures; and they rise up in arms against the attempt. And are these willing to be saved by Christ, who abhor the salvation he offers them? The truth of the matter is, the conduct of sinners in this case is the greatest absurdity: they are willing to be happy, but they are not willing to be holy, in which alone their happiness consists: they are willing to be saved from hell, but they are not willing to be saved from those dispositions which would create

a hell within them, even according to the nature of things: they are willing to go to heaven when they can live no longer in this their favourite world; but they are unwilling to be prepared for it in their temper and disposition. An eternity spent in holy exercises would be an eternal drudgery to them, unless they have a relish for holiness. Freedom from sin would be a painful bereavement to them while they take pleasure in sin, and how then could they be happy, even in the very region of happiness, since the sordid pleasures of sin never mingle with those pure rivers of living water? In short, they act as absurdly as if they were willing to recover their health, and yet were unwilling to part with their sickness, or to be restrained from those things which are the causes of it. They are willing to go to heaven, but it is in their own way; that is, in the way that leads to hell. The only way of salvation, according to the divine appointment, is the way of holiness. Indeed Christ came into the world to save sinners; but these sinners must be made saints before they can enter into his kingdom: and he makes them holy in order to be happy. And this is not an arbitrary appointment, but necessary, in the very nature of things; for, as I observed, till they are made holy, it is impossible in the nature of things they should be happy in heaven, because the happiness of heaven consists in the perfection of holiness. To be saved without holiness is as impossible as to be healthy without health, or saved without salvation. Therefore, for God to gratify the sinner, and gratify him in his own way; that is, in his sins, is an impossibility; as impossible as for a physician to heal an obstinate patient in his own way; that is, to heal him by letting him retain and cherish his disease; letting him cool a fever with cold water, or drink poison to cure a consumption. God is wise in all his constitutions, and therefore the way of salvation through Christ is agreeable to the nature of things; it is in itself consistent and possible: and if sinners are not willing to be saved in this possible way, they are not willing in reality to be saved at all.

Again, The way of salvation by Christ is all through grace. It is adapted to stain the glory, and mortify the pride of all flesh, and to advance to the mercy of God, and the honour of Christ, without a rival. Now haughty self-righteous sinners are unwilling to be saved in this humbling mortifying way, and therefore they are unwilling to be saved by Christ. If they would be saved by him, they must be saved entirely upon the footing of his merit, and not their own; they must own that they lie at mercy, they must feel themselves self-condemned, they must utterly renounce all dependence upon their own righteousness, and receive every blessing as the free unmerited gift of grace. And it is the hardest thing imaginable to bring a proud sinner so low as this; but till he is brought thus low, he cannot be saved upon the gospel-plan. Nor is this part of the constitution arbitrary any more than the former. It would be inconsistent with the honour of the great God, the Supreme Magistrate of the universe, and with the dignity of his government, to receive a rebel into favour, on any other footing than that of mere grace. If after sinning so much, the sinner still has merit enough to procure a pardon, in whole or in part, or to render it cruel or unjust for God to condemn and punish him, certainly he must be a Being of very great importance indeed; and sin against God must be a very small evil. To save a sinner in a way that would give any room for such insinuations as these, would be inconsistent with the honour of God and his government; and therefore the plan he has constituted is a method of grace, of pure rich grace, in all and every part. Now, while sinners are not willing to be saved in this way, they are not willing to be saved at all. Here lies their grand mistake: Because they have a general willingness that Christ should save them from hell, they therefore conclude they are really willing to come to him according to the gospel-constitution, whereas there is nothing in the world to which they are more averse. There are many that think, and perhaps declare, they would give ten thousand worlds for Christ, when in reality they are not willing to receive

him as a free gift: they are not yet brought to that extremity as to fly to him. No, the sinner is brought low indeed before he is brought to this. He is entirely cut off from all hope from every other quarter; particularly, he sees that he cannot shelter himself any longer under the covert of his own righteousness, but that he will be overwhelmed with a deluge of divine vengeance, unless he hides himself under the wings of Jesus.

I beg you would examine yourselves impartially on this point, my brethren, for here lies the grand delusion that ruins thousands. If you are really willing to fly to Jesus, and be saved by him in his own way, you may be sure he is infinitely more willing than you are; nay, your willingness is the effect of his for he first made you so. But if, when you examine the matter to the bottom, you find, that notwithstanding all your pretensions, you are really unwilling to fly to him, consider your dangerous situation; for,

6. The text implies, that this unwillingness of sinners is the real cause of their destruction.

Sinners complain of the want of ability; but what is their inability but their unwillingness? Coming to Christ is an act of the will, and therefore to will it heartily, is to perform the act. To be unable to come to him is to be so perverse, so disaffected to Jesus Christ, as not to have power to will to come to him. This, by the way, shews the vanity of that popular excuse, "I am not able to fly to Christ, and therefore it is not my fault if I do not." That is, you are so wicked that you can do no good thing; you are so disaffected to Jesus Christ that you have no will, no inclination, to choose him for your Saviour; you are such an obstinate enemy to him, that you would rather perish than take him for your Friend; therefore your not coming to him is no crime. Is this consistent reasoning? Is it not all one, as if a rebel should think to excuse himself by pleading, "I have such an inveterate hatred to my sovereign, that I cannot love him:" Or a robber, "I have such an aversion to honesty, that I cannot possibly help stealing?" Would not this be an aggravation of the crime rather than an excuse?

Is the invincible strength of your disaffection to Christ a vindication of it? Are you the more excusable, by how much the more you hate him?—Sinners, give up this foolish reasoning, for the matter is too important to be trifled with. Your inability in this case is nothing else but your unwillingness; and your unwillingness is the effect of nothing else but your disaffection to Jesus Christ; therefore own that this is the true cause of your destruction.

In short, whatever pleas and excuses you make, you will find at last that your destruction is entirely the effect of your own perverse choice. *Ye will not come unto Christ that ye might have life*, John v. 40. and therefore you must perish without it. This reflection will for ever torment you, that you wilfully destroyed yourselves, and were guilty of the most unnatural self-murder. Jesus was willing, but you would not. God has even sworn that he *has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn and live.* To you therefore I may properly address that expostulation, *Why will ye die?* Why will ye? why do ye most wilfully destroy yourselves? why do ye ruin yourselves by your own free choice? why will you die? you, whom Jesus is willing to save, whom he has so often invited, why will you, above all men in the world, causelessly die by your own act? Are you capable of so much stupidity? It is a stupidity that is a dreadful peculiarity of your own, for,

7. Unwillingness to fly to Jesus is the most irrational, and worse than brutal stupidity.

This is implied in my text. No sooner does the hen give the signal of danger, than her little family, taught by instinct to understand the alarm, immediately fly under her wings. "So, says Christ, I gave you the alarm, but you would not regard it; so I spread out the wing of my guardian care to defend you, but you would not shelter under it." What more than brutal stupidity is this? In this light, the conduct of sinners is frequently exposed in the sacred writings. *The ox knoweth his owner*, says Isaiah, *and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know,*

my people doth not consider. Isaiah i. 3. *Every one turneth to his course,* says Jeremiah, *as the horse rusheth into the battle; yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people,* more stupid than they, *know not the judgment of the Lord.* Jer. viii. 6, 7. To refuse the offer of eternal salvation, when proposed upon the most reasonable terms—to rush into hell, rather than be saved by the friendly hands of Jesus Christ—to suffer the most terrible execution, rather than accept a free pradon—to reject all the bliss of heaven when freely proposed—to choose the pleasures of sin for a season, rather than an eternity of the most exalted happiness—to resist the calls of redeeming love, and all the friendly efforts of divine grace to save a sinking soul—is this the conduct of a reasonable creature? No; shew me the brute, if you can, that would act so stupid a part in things that come within the sphere of his capacity. Would it not be better for you to be a cat or dog (to use the language of the Earl of Rochester) than that animal Man, who is so proud of being rational, if you make so rational a choice? Let me endeavour to make you sensible,

8. And lastly, That this conduct is extremely affecting and lamentable.

It is on this account that Jesus laments over Jerusalem in such pathetic strains in my text. He knew the truth of the case; his all-seeing eye took it in all its extent, and viewed it in all its circumstances and consequences. And since he, who knew it best, deeply laments it, we may be sure it is lamentable indeed, and it cannot but appear so even to us who know so little of it. An immortal soul lost! lost for ever! lost by its own obstinacy! lost amidst the means of salvation! how tragical a case is this!—God dishonoured! Jesus rejected! his love defeated! his blood trampled upon! his spirits grieved! how lamentable is this?—And yet are there not some of you in this lamentable condition in this assembly? It was over such as you that Jesus wept and mourned. And shall he weep

alone? shall not our tears keep time with his, since we are so much more nearly concerned? *O that our heads were waters, and our eyes fountains of tears,* that we might weep along with the Saviour of men! But alas! our tears are too much reserved for dying friends, or some less affecting object, while immortal souls perish around us, unpitied, unlamented!

SERMON XLVII.

The Nature of Love to God and Christ opened and enforced.

John. xxi. 17.

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

THERE is nothing more essential to religion, or of more importance in it, than divine love. Divine love is the sole spring of all acceptable obedience in this life, and the grand prerequisite for complete happiness in the enjoyment of God in the world to come; and without it, all our religion, all our gifts and improvements, however high and miraculous, are vain.

And as it is of the utmost importance in reality, it is confessed to be so by all mankind, who acknowledge the existence of a Deity. Whatever be the religion, or whatever be the object, still it is universally acknowledged, that love is an essential part of it. And indeed the evidence for this is so very glaring, that it is no wonder mankind have not been able to shut their eyes against it. Religion without love, is as great a contradiction as friendship without love. To worship a God whom we do not love, to adore excellencies which we disaffect, to profess a religion founded by an enemy, this is the greatest absurdity imaginable. Such a religion must appear abominable to God and man.

Now divine love is the subject of my text, which I have chosen for your present meditation; and you see I have not chosen a subject that is trifling in itself, or the disputed peculiarity of a party. You need not therefore be under apprehensions that I would pro-

selyte you to any thing but the sincere love of God and Jesus Christ. However, I would not have you judge of my design by my verbal declarations, but by the apparent tendency of my discourse, of which you will be able to form a judgment when I have done. Therefore entertain no prejudices or suspicions till you see reason, lest you deprive yourselves of that benefit you might otherwise receive from your present attendance.

There is so little solicitous enquiry among men concerning the sincerity of their love to God, that it would seem self-evident, and beyond all dispute. Whatever sins they indulge themselves in, however much they practically neglect God and religion, yet still they insist upon it, they love him sincerely. This piece of merit they all claim, as belonging to them beyond dispute. But is divine love indeed a thing so common, so universal? We read that *the carnal mind is enmity against God.* Rom. viii. 7. And is there no such thing as a carnal mind now to be found upon earth? We are told of some that were *haters of God.* Rom. i. 30.—*enemies in their minds by wicked works.* Col. i. 21. And are there none such to be found among us? The heart-searching Jesus, while conversant among mortals, told the Jews, who made so great a profession of their love to God, and suspected their own sincerity as little as any of us, *I know you, that you have not the love of God in you.* John v. 42. And were he now to pass sentence upon us, would he not make the same declaration with regard to sundry of us, who perhaps are least apprehensive of it? Is it a needless thing for us to enter into a serious conference with our own hearts, and ask them, "Do I indeed love the ever blessed God, and the only Saviour? Will my love stand the test? What are its properties and effects?" Is this, my brethren, a superfluous or impertinent enquiry? I am sure it did not seem so to Christ, who put Peter to the trial upon this point no less than thrice.

Our Lord made a meal with his disciples, to convince them of the reality of his body after his resurrection. When it was finished, he turns to Peter, and

asks him a very serious question, *Simon, son of Jonas, loveth thou me?* The very proposal of the question seems to suppose that Peter had given some reason to suspect his love to him, as he had really done a few days before, by denying him thrice, with shocking aggravations; and with this reference the enquiry was very cutting to Peter, and no doubt made him think thus with himself: "Ah! it is no wonder my Lord should call my love in question, who so lately most ungratefully denied him." The question is put to him openly, before the whole company, which might perhaps increase his confusion; but it was prudently ordered, that he might declare his love to Jesus as openly as he had denied him, and that his brethen might be satisfied of his sincerity, and recovery from his late fall.

The first form of the question implies a comparison: *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?* that is, more than these thy fellow-disciples? "It is not long since, Peter, that thou didst declare, Though all should forsake thee, yet will not I; though all my fellow-disciples should prove treacherous, yet I am determined to adhere to thee, come what will; and art thou still of the same mind? Peter modestly replies, *Lord thou knowest that I love thee:* as much as to say, "Lord, I own that I have fallen more foully than any of my brethren, and I dare not say I love thee more than they do; I dare say nothing of the high degree of my love, in comparison with others; but, Lord, I must assert the sincerity of my love, weak as it is, and I humbly adventure to appeal to thee, who knowest all things, and canst not be deceived with fair pretensions for the truth of my profession*."

Peter no doubt, hoped this declaration would satisfy his Lord. But Jesus, after a pause, puts the question to him again, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?*

* Or the comparison in the question may refer to the provision they had just fed upon, and the employment they had just been in. *Q. D.* "Lovest thou me more than thou lovest these fish and thy fishing trade? Peter replies, *Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* Well, says Christ, if thou dost really love me, leave this employment, and feed my sheep; let that be thy business for the future, and shew thy love to me by thy tender care of my sheep; that is, of my church."

And Peter insists upon his former answer, *Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.*

Now he hoped to escape all future questions upon this point. But Jesus, as though he were still suspicious of him, puts it to him a third time, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* Peter was grieved that this enquiry should be put to him successively no less than thrice; it cut him to the heart with the remembrance of his base denial of his Master as often, and perhaps with a fear that he would not now be convinced of his sincerity, but was about to expose him as a traitor, and discard him. Upon this he grows warm, and replies with the most passionate vehemence, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* As much as to say, "Lord, why dost thou try me so often upon this point? Look only into my heart, which lies all open to thy view, and be thou judge thyself, whether I do not sincerely love thee. I must confess my late conduct looked very suspicious; and I reflect upon it with shame and sorrow: I am unworthy to be ranked by thee among thy friends. But, Lord, unworthy as I am, and base and suspicious as my conduct was, I must insist upon it, that I do love thee; and it wounds me to the heart that thou shouldst seem so jealous of me. I cannot give up this point; and I appeal to thyself for the truth of it." Jealousy in love, my brethren, suspicion among friends, is a very painful and anxious passion; and never so much so to a pious heart, as when the sincerity of our love to God is the object of it. Such a person cannot be easy while a matter of so much importance lies under suspicion, but must put it beyond all doubt.

And let me tell you, sirs, this is a question in which we are all most nearly concerned. Are our conduct and temper towards God so entirely and uniformly friendly and dutiful, as to put it beyond all doubt that we do truly love him? Alas! are there not many things that look very suspicious in our case? Should Jesus now call each of us by our names, as he did Peter, and ask us, one by one, *Lovest thou me?* what could we answer? Could we honestly desire him to look into our hearts, that he might see that sacred

principle there? and could we produce the genuine evidences of it in our lives? My brethren, if there be an enquiry within the compass of human knowledge that deserves the most solicitous attention, certainly this does. And it is my present design to assist you to come to a determination upon it. I say, we are now going upon this search, "Do I really love the Lord Jesus?" Come, sirs, let us all join in it; let us all resolve to be determined in this point before we leave this place. For this purpose I shall point out some plain marks of genuine love, and then, supposing that you will have discovered your real character in this respect, I shall address you as divided into two different classes; the friends, and the enemies of Jesus. And as love to God, and love to Jesus Christ, who is God as well as man, are substantially the same, and cannot be separated, I shall not nicely distinguish between them, but speak upon the one or the other, as may be most conducive to my design.

1. I am to point out some plain genuine marks of divine love: and these I shall derive either from plain scripture, or from the apparent nature and inseparable properties of that passion.

I need hardly tell you, that while there is so much hypocrisy, flattery, and compliment in the world, a man's professing the Christian Religion, and a supreme regard to its Founder, is no certain evidence of divine love. Insincerity and treachery, which have done so much mischief in private friendships, and betrayed so many kingdoms, has diffused itself, like a malignant poison, into the affairs of religion; and men dare to compliment and flatter even the heart-searching God. Judas betrayed his Lord with an *Hail, Master, and a kiss;* and his conduct before that had the appearance of friendship, otherwise the disciples would have suspected him for the traitor upon the first hint. Therefore there must be something more substantial to evidence the truth of our love, than a mere profession, or the external forms of religion.

Nor does true love consist in a speculative languid esteem, or a careless, unaffecting good opinion of Jesus Christ. We may think and speak highly of

him, and believe very great things concerning him, while the heart is dead and cold towards him; yea, full of enmity against him. All this may be the effect of education, or cool reasoning, and may hover in the head, without sinking deep into the heart, and becoming a governing principle in practice. It is this speculative good opinion of him which, I am afraid, the generality mistake for divine love. They cannot but know that their hearts are habitually careless and indifferent towards God, that they do not feel those affectionate emotions and strong tendencies of soul towards him, which they feel towards all other objects of their love. However, when they happen to think of him it is sometimes with a kind of high esteem; and this they take to be a genuine love to him, though it has no correspondent effects upon their temper or conduct.

I may add farther, That some may love God upon a mistake; that is, they love him upon supposition that he is quite another kind of being than he really is; and did they conceive of him as he is, he would appear to their depraved hearts rather an object of terror and abhorrence, than of love and delight. For example, they may suppose him so soft, easy, and passive a being, as not to resent their rebellious conduct; so merciful, as hardly ever to execute justice upon sinners; so careless of the honour of his law and government, as to pass by all their disobedience; and so foolishly fond of his creatures, as to advance them to happiness promiscuously without any regard to their moral character, or the honour of his perfections. Such a Deity as this is formed exactly according to their taste, to encourage them in sin, and relieve them from horrors of conscience and the fears of futurity; and no wonder they should love such a Being as this, so like themselves: even criminals would love a judge of this character. But this is not the true God, but the creature of their own foolish imaginations. This is not that God before whom the celestial armies cry, *Holy, holy, holy; who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; who is a God of truth and without iniquity; just and right is he;* who turns the wicked into hell, and all the nations that forget God; and

who will not admit one soul into heaven but what is made holy in temper and practice beforehand. And did they view him in this light, they would be so far from loving him, that their carnal minds would rise in enmity against him. Now to love God upon such a supposition, is not to please him, but to reproach and affront him; and he resents it as the highest indignity. How would you take it, if a rake or a villain should love you upon a mistaken notion, that you were a libertine, a thief, or a liar, like himself? Would you thank him for such a friendship? No; you would esteem it the basest affront. And when you had convinced him of his mistake, his love would be turned into hatred. My brethren, we must love God for what he is, otherwise we do not love him at all. We must therefore know him in some measure as he is, before we can rationally love him; and particularly, we must know and delight in those perfections which are most unacceptable to guilty and depraved creatures, his justice, holiness, and infinite hatred of sin, before we can truly love him.

Having cautioned you against these plausible and popular mistakes, I now resume my purpose, and shall point out some undoubted marks of genuine and sincere love. And that I may not perplex you with too many particulars, I shall only mention these four: That it is of a divine and supernatural original—and that it produces frequent and affectionate thoughts of its object—A delight in communion with him—And an earnest study and endeavour to please him, by a life of universal obedience.

1. If you would determine this important enquiry, "Do I really love the Lord Jesus Christ?" you must previously enquire how you came by your love? whether it be the mere effect of nature, of education, or any thing within the power of man? or whether it was wrought in your hearts by the almighty power of God, after many rebellious struggles and insurrections, and a full conviction of the innate enmity of your carnal minds against him? If it be the spontaneous production of your own hearts, or of natural causes, if you have always been possessed of it, and never found

it difficult to obtain or cherish it? If you have not been sensible of a supernatural power working it in you, you may be sure it is all delusion. For though the passion of love be innate in our nature, and is easily excited by a thousand created beauties, yet alas! it has no natural tendency towards God. Human nature in its present state is strangely indisposed and disaffected in this respect, as experience has abundantly convinced us, unless we have been stupidly inobservant with regard to ourselves. A state of nature is uniformly represented in scripture as a state of enmity against God. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh*, John iii. 6.; and therefore by nature we are all flesh in the scripture style. Now *they that are in the flesh cannot please God*, says St. Paul, *because the carnal mind is enmity against God*, &c. Rom. viii. 7, 8. The scriptures everywhere represent us as being saved in the way of reconciliation; now reconciliation supposes a previous variance and enmity. Nay, St. Paul expressly tells us, that *we were enemies when we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.* Rom. v. 10. By nature we are *children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3.; and surely we cannot be children of wrath and lovers of God at one and the same time! Here then you must all plead guilty. Whatever you now are, it is beyond all doubt that you were once enemies to God. It is sufficient conviction against you that you are men, and belong to a race universally disaffected. And now have you ever been brought out of that state? if not, you are enemies to God still. You could not pass from death unto life in a dream, or an entire insensibility; for you must have experienced a great change, and you must have been sensible of, and may now recollect a great many deep and affecting sensations that attended it. You must have seen and been shocked at your disaffection: you must have been brought to cry in the most importunate manner to God to give you a better temper, and to shed abroad his love in your hearts by the Holy Ghost. Rom. v. 5. In short, you are made new creatures; old things are passed away, and all things are become new; and all these new things are of God, who hath reconciled you

to himself. 2 Cor. v, 17, 18. Now if this be the test, what would you say to this question, *Lovest thou me?* Some of you, I trust, could answer, "Lord, I am afraid of the truth of my love; but this I am sure of, a great change hath been wrought in my soul. Whether I am now a sincere lover of God or not, I am sure I am not what I once was; not only my outward practice, but the inward temper of my heart towards thee is vastly altered; it is more filial, affectionate, and dutiful." If any of you can advance thus far in your answer, my brethren, it looks comfortable, though you should still be jealous of yourselves. But, sirs, let conscience now deal honestly with you; Are there not many of you who are still in your natural state? All your religion is an earth-born self-sprung thing. You have never been the subjects of a supernatural work of divine grace, nor felt such a great change in the temper of your minds; and if this is your case I must pronounce, that however many amiable qualities you may be possessed of, and however fair a profession you make of religion, you have not the love of God in you; for how should you have it, when it is not natural to you, and when it has not been implanted in you by an operation above nature? Indeed, my brethren, if this be your case, you are plainly convicted this day of being destitute of the very first principle of all religion; and pray admit the conviction: you may as well expect to be men without being born, as to love God without being born again. But,

2. If we love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, we frequently and affectionately think of him. This you know is the genius and tendency of love in general, to fix our thoughts upon its object; and the Psalmist often mentions this as an attendant of his love to God. *How precious are the thoughts of thee unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! if I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake I am still with thee.* Psal. cxxxix. 17, 18. *I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.* Psal. lxiii. 6. *My meditation of him shall be sweet.* Psalm civ. 34. Isaiah represents the whole church as saying, *The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee: with my soul have I desired thee in the*

night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early. Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. This you see is the character of the lovers of God. And, on the other hand, his enemies are characterized as persons who do not like to retain him in their knowledge, Rom. i. 28. *who forget God;* Psal. ix. 17. and, l. 22. *God is not in all their thoughts,* Psal. x. 4; but they practically *say unto the Almighty, depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thyways.* Job xxi. 14. The thoughts of an enemy are always ungrateful, especially if he is unable to avenge himself of his adversaries; and the mind will turn every way to avoid them. But the thoughts of one we love, how sweet, how welcome, how often do they return! How often does the dear image of an absent friend rise to the mind! and with what affectionate endearments! Unless you are entire strangers to this generous passion, you know by experience this is the nature and tendency of love.

And do not these things enable some of you to give a comfortable answer to this question, *Lovest thou me?* You are often jealous of your love; but if you love him not, why do your thoughts make so many eager sallies to him? Once your thoughts could dwell within the compass of created nature, and fly from vanity to vanity, without attempting a flight to heaven. But now do they not often break through the limits of creation, in eager search after God as that supreme good? And with what affectionate eagerness do they at times dwell there! How do your souls delight to survey and gaze at his perfections, and contemplate the wonders of his works! And how often do your thoughts hover round a crucified Jesus, and, as it were, cling and cluster to his cross, like the bees round the hive! You do not indeed think of him so frequently, or with such affectionate endearments as you should. But can you not appeal to himself, that the thoughts of him are welcome to your minds; that you do at times dwell with pleasure in the delightful contemplation, even when your hands are busy about other things; and that it is your daily sorrow that your hearts are not more intimate with him, and pay him more frequent visits? Does not your experience tell you, that you cannot always let your thoughts grovel in the dust, or run out in an endless

chace of things below, but that in some happy hours they rise on the wings of love, and most affectionately cleave to your dear Redeemer? And your thoughts are not the cold speculations of a philosopher, but the warm, passionate, and heart-affecting thoughts of a christian. If this be your case, my brethren, take courage. You love the Lord Jesus Christ, and you may be sure he loves you, and will treat you as his friends.

But are there not many of you who may be convinced by those things, that you have not the love of God in you? For are you not conscious that your affectionate thoughts are prostituted to some trifle in this lower world, and hardly ever aspire to him? Nay, are not the thoughts of God, and things divine and eternal unwelcome to you? and do you not cast them out of your minds as you would shake a spark of fire from your bosoms? Do not you find yourselves shy of him, and alienated from him? Do not those things give you pain which would turn your thoughts towards him? You do not affect such subjects of meditation or conversation, and you soon grow weary and uneasy when your minds are tied down to them! And what can be the cause of this, but a strong disaffection to God, and a secret consciousness that he is your enemy on this account? O sirs, what can be more astonishing, or what can be a stronger evidence of enmity to God, than that men should live in such a world as this, and yet hardly ever have one affectionate thought of their great Author, Presever, and Benefactor! His glory shines upon them from all his works, and meets their eye, wherever they look; his word exhibits him to their view in a still more bright and amiable light. It represents the Lord Jesus in all the love and agonies of his crucifixion, and in all the glories of his exaltation; they are receiving mercies from him every moment of their lives; for in him they live, and move, and have their being: their own reason and consciences tell them that he is the most excellent and lovely being, and worthy of supreme and universal love, and they profess to believe it; and yet he cannot, after all, gain so much as their frequent

and affectionate thoughts? Their thoughts, those cheap and easy things, are ungratefully denied to him, who gave them a power of thinking! O what stupid indifferency about the supreme good, or rather what prevailing enmity is here! Can you pretend to be lovers of Jesus Christ while this is your case? Can you excuse or extenuate this under the soft name of infirmity? No, it is rank, inveterate, sullen enmity; and a righteous God resents it as such. But,

III. If you love God and the Lord Jesus Christ, you delight in communion with them. Friends, you know, delight to converse together, to unbosom themselves to one another, and to enjoy the freedoms of society. They are fond of interviews, and seize every opportunity for that purpose; and absence is tedious and painful to them. If you are so happy as to have a friend, you know by experience this is the nature of love. Now, though God be a spirit, and infinitely above all sensible converse with the sons of men, yet he does not keep himself at a distance from his people. He has access to their spirits, and allows them to carry on a spiritual commerce with him, which is the greatest happiness of their lives. Hence God is so often said in the scripture to draw near to them, and they to him, Jam. iv. 8. Heb. vii. 19. Psalm lxix. 18. and lxxiii. 28. Heb. x. 22. Lam. iii. 57.: and St. John, speaking of himself and his fellow-christians, says, *Truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ.* 1 John i. 3. This divine fellowship is promised by Christ to all his friends, John xiv. 21, 23.: *He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him;—we will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* This mystical fellowship is peculiar to the friends of God; and others know nothing of it. They are represented as poor strangers and aliens, that have no communication with God. Eph. ii. 12. Col. i. 21. He is shy of them and they of him: they keep at a distance from one another, like persons disaffected. This communion on God's part consists in his communicating to his people the influences of his grace, to quicken

them, to inflame their love, to give them filial boldness in drawing near to him, in assuring them of his love to them, and representing himself to them as reconciled and accessable. And on their part it consists in a παῤῥησια, a liberty of heart and speech in pouring out their prayers to him, a delightful freedom of spirit in all exercises of devotion, in returning him love for love, and dedicating themselves to him. Thus there is a kind of interchange of thoughts and affections, mutual freedoms and endearments, between them. And O! how divinely sweet in some happy hours of sacred intimacy! This indeed is heaven upon earth: and, might it but continue without interruption, the life of a lover of God would be a constant series of pure unmingled happiness. But alas! at times their Beloved withdraws himself, and goes from them, and then they languish, and pine away, and mourn, like the mourning turtle that has lost his mate. This intercourse with God may be a strange thing to some of you; and to vindicate the want of it, you may give it some odious name; enthusiasm, fanaticism, or heated imagination. But I must tell you, if you know nothing of it, your temper and experience is entirely different from all the friends of God, and therefore you cannot rank yourselves in that happy number.

Now the ordinances of the gospel are, as it were, the places of interview, where God and his people meet, and where they indulge those sacred freedoms. It is in prayer, in meditation, in reading, or hearing his word, in communicating at his table; it is in these and the like exercises that God communicates, and, as it were, unbosoms himself to those that love him; and they enjoy the freedom of children and friends with him: and on this account they delight in those ordinances, and take pleasure in attending upon them. The workings of their hearts in this respect, you may discover in David, when, by the persecution of Saul, or the rebellion of his son Absalom, he was banished from the stated ordinances of public worship. Psalm xlii. 1, 2, 4. and lxxxiv. throughout, and xxvii. 4.

And now, my brethren, to come nearer home, have

not some of you experienced the sacred joys of communion with God? And were not those the sweetest hours of your life? Have you not found it good for you to draw near to him? And when he has withdrawn his presence, how have you languished and mourned, and could never be easy till he was pleased to return to you? Do you not also find a sacred pleasure in the institutions of the gospel, because there you hope to meet your God, and enjoy communion with him? Is this the principle that prompts you to pray, to hear, and perform every religious duty? Then you may appeal to a heart-searching God, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.*

But does not this view of the matter give the conscience of some of you reason to condemn you. You have neither known nor desired this fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Alas! you know nothing of those freedoms of divine friendship: and you have no prevailing pleasure in devotion. You either neglect the duties of religion, or else you perform them from custom, education, constraint of conscience, or some other such principle. Let me point out one instance as a specimen; and that is secret prayer and closet-devotion. Nothing can be more expressly commanded than this is by Christ, Matt. vi. 6.; and is this your daily practice? Is this the most pleasant exercise of your life? Or is it a mere formality, or a weariness to you? My brethren, inquire honestly into this matter.

IV. And lastly, If you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you earnestly study and endeavour to please him by a life of universal obedience. Love is always desirous to please the person beloved; and it will naturally lead to a conduct that is pleasing. This, then, you may be sure of, that if you love Jesus, it is the labour of your life to please him. The grand inquiry with you is not, Will this or that please men? will it please myself? or will it promote my interest? but, will it please my God and Saviour? If not, I will have nothing to do with it. This is the standing rule of your practice: Let others consult their own inclinations, or the taste of the age; let them consult their own secular interest,

or the applause of mortals: you consult what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, Rom. xii. 2. See also Eph. vi. 6. 1 Pet. iii. 17. Heb. xiii. 21.: and if you may but please him, it is enough. But are there not some of you who are hardly ever concerned with this dutiful solicitude? If you can but please yourselves, and those whose favour you would court, if you can but promote your own interest, you are not solicitous whether you please God, or not. This proves you destitute of his love.

The only way to please God, and the best test of your love to him, is obedience to his commandments. This is made the decisive mark by Christ himself. *If a man love me, he will keep my words—He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings.* John xiv. 23, 24.—He repeats it over and over in different forms; *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.* ver. 21. *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* ver. 15. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* John xv. 14. *This is the love of God,* says St. John, that is, it is the surest evidence, and the natural inseparable effect of your love of God, *that you keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous,* 1 John v. 3.; that is, they will not seem grievous to one that obeys them from the generous principle of love.

Here then, you that profess to love the Lord Jesus, here is an infallible test for your love. Do you make it the great study of your life to keep his commandments? Do you honestly endeavour to perform every duty he has enjoined, and that because he has enjoined it? And do you vigorously resist and struggle against every sin, however constitutional, however fashionable, however gainful, because he forbids it? And is the way of obedience pleasant to you? Would you choose this way to heaven rather than any other, if it were left to your election? What does conscience answer to this? Do not some of you stumble and hesitate here? If you should speak the truth, you must say, "I cannot but confess that I do wilfully indulge myself in some things which Jesus has forbidden, and leave unattempted some duties which he has com-

manded?" Alas! is this the case? Then his love does not dwell in you: you are undeniably his enemies, whatever be your pretensions. But if you can say, "Lord, I own that in many things I offend; in many things I come short of my duty; but, if I know myself, I think, I can honestly declare, that it is my sincere and earnest desire to do thy will, and that it is my real endeavour in every instance in which it is made known to me;" I say, if you can make this declaration, your case looks encouraging: this is the dutiful temper and modest language of genuine love.

And now, my brethren, if Jesus should put this question to each of you, *Lovest thou me?* Are you prepared to answer him? Can you desire more plain, or more certain evidences than have been given? Surely, no; and therefore, if you are still quite undetermined, it is owing to the real obscurity and perplexity of your case, or to your carelessness and inattention, or to your wilfully shutting your eyes against conviction. My brethren, if you have these characteristics of love to Jesus, away with your painful jealousies, and believe that your hearts are upright before him. But if you are destitute of them, be assured you are equally destitute of his love. Love can never be separated from its natural fruits and effects; and therefore, without these, it is the greatest absurdity to pretend to it. Can you rise up now, and tell the Lord Jesus to his face, "Lord, it is true, I have not the fruits and evidences of love, but I love thee notwithstanding: I love thee above all, though I have no frequent affectionate thoughts of thee; I love thee, though I hate to think of thee; though I have no pleasure in conversing with thee, nor any concerns to please thee, and keep thy commandments; that is, I love thee, though my temper and conduct towards thee be those of an enemy!" Alas! sirs, will you presume to impose upon an omniscient God, with such absurd contradictory pretensions as these? Would such a love as this pass current among men? Offer it now to your governor, your father, or your friend, and see if they will accept of it. Tell your friend,

"I most sincerely love you, though I do not love to think of you, or converse with you: I love you, though I care not whether I please you!" would he not discard you from his friendship, as an inconsistent pretender, and highly resent it, that you should think to impose upon him by such absurd pretensions? And shall that pass for sincere, supreme love to God, which would not be accepted as common friendship among men? Shall enmity, disguised under hypocritical pretensions, be offered to him, under the name of friendship? With horror I mention it; and yet I must mention it, that you may be shocked at your conduct; do you think he wants understanding to be thus imposed upon? It is a plain case you have not the least spark of true love to him; you are enemies to him in your minds, by wicked works, therefore pass sentence upon yourselves; "Here is a soul so perverse and wicked, that it has never yet loved its divine Parent and the supreme excellency; has never loved the blessed Jesus, the Friend of sinners." And now, should all the enemies of God in this assembly walk to one side, and crowd together by themselves, how thin would they leave this congregation? How few would be left behind! Well, the day is coming, when you must be separated, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. To the left hand, sinners, to the left hand of your Judge, you must go, who continue destitute of his love. Then you will know the truth of your case; but alas! it will be too late to correct it. But now the discovery of it is the first step towards the amendment of it: and therefore, let your consciences now anticipate the proceedings of the great judgment-day, and draw a line of separation betwixt you, that I may address you according to the classes in which you are found. This leads me, pursuant to my proposed method,

II. To address myself to you who have now discovered that you are sincere lovers of Jesus Christ, notwithstanding your many imperfections. And my time will allow me to offer only two things to you.

The one is, your heaven is sure! I repeat it again, your heaven is sure! as sure as the sincerity of your

love. Love is the grand qualification for the enjoyment of God. You can be happy in his presence, because you love him: happy in his service, because you love him: happy in the contemplation of his glories, because you love him. In short, love renders you fit for heaven, and all its employments and fruitions, and therefore you shall certainly be admitted there; for God never will exclude one soul that is fit for it, or that could relish the happiness there. Love is the substance of all religion and obedience: love is the fulfilling of the law; and that love you have in your hearts. O happy souls, "rejoice in hope of the glory of God:" for, as the apostle reasons, *your hope will not make you ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost.* Rom. v. 4, 5. Love is an immortal principle. *Charity*, or love, *never faileth.* 1 Cor. xiii. 8. It is therefore, not only your privilege, but your duty to rejoice: and how can you refrain, when in a few years at most, you will be with that Jesus whom you love unseen, in all the glories, and in all the felicities of the heavenly world!

The other thing I would mention to you is, alas! how faint, how imperfect is your love! And what great reason have you to cherish it, and labour to raise it into a vigorous flame? I need not offer much for your conviction on this head; for alas! you cannot but be sensible your love bears no suitable proportion to the excellency of the divine nature, the dying love of Jesus, and your obligations to him. Alas! it is but a feeble spark, and sometimes so buried and suffocated under the weight of your corruptions, that you can hardly discern it at all, and fear it is entirely extinguished. O then, I beseech you, love your God more; love your dear Redeemer more. Do not affront him with such a languid love: think over his excellencies, his relations to you, his unbounded love and grace to you; and these considerations may fire your hearts, cold as they are. Cry to him to kindle this sacred flame in your breasts, and avoid every thing that tends to damp it: guard against the friendship of this world, which is enmity against

God; and against all the workings of sin: avoid all causes of variance and distance between God and you, and labour to maintain a settled peace and a constant correspondence. But the other class of my hearers stand in greater need of immediate relief, and therefore,

III. I shall address myself to such of you as may have discovered, by this day's trial, that you are destitute of the love of Christ: and what I have to say to you, my dear fellow mortals, may be reduced under two heads, your sin and danger—and the most proper means of deliverance.

To convince you of your sin and danger in not loving God and his Son Jesus Christ, consider,

1. It is the supreme excellency that you have refused to love. The most venerable Majesty, the most consummate wisdom, the most rich goodness and grace, the most amiable justice; these are the things you disaffect, while you are disaffected towards God; for these are his very nature. You neglect and disgust faithfulness, candour, veracity, mercy, benevolence, and every moral beauty in the highest perfection. You are enemies to the origin, the sum total of all excellency. Now this may strike you with conviction in various views—as first, how depraved and corrupt must your souls be, that can be disaffected to such a glorious object? How must your taste be vitiated, that cannot relish the supreme good? You can love the faint shadows of these perfections in your fellow-creatures; you can love generosity, benevolence, mercy, justice, and such virtues, in mortals, and may you not fall down overwhelmed with astonishment, and cry out, "Lord, what is this that has befallen my soul that I cannot love thee? that I can love any thing else that is lovely, and yet cannot love thee? O! what a perverse, depraved, abominable soul is this!" Sirs, must you not be shocked to think you have such souls within you? If your bodies were all over-run with rotten ulcers; if your features were all convulsed and distorted into the most hideous forms; if your limbs were all shattered and dislocated; if your taste were so vitiated that you loathed all healthful food, and you should crawl upon the earth, feeding

on its mire and dirt; all this would not render you half so odious and horrible a monster as a soul disaffected towards God. Again, What an aggravated wickedness must this be? Your obligations to love him are just in proportion to his loveliness and excellency; and the wickedness of breaking these obligations is in exact proportion to their strength. And as his excellency and your obligations are infinite, your wickedness in not loving him must be so too. What illustration shall I use to represent this crime in its proper infernal colours? If you should commence an enemy to the whole creation; prosecute men and angels with implacable abhorrence; detest the father that begat you, and the breasts that gave you suck; nay, if you should commence a direct enemy to yourself, be perpetually plotting against your own life, all this would not equal the crime of hating the ever-blessed God; for all these beings together have no excellency compared to him, and your obligation to love him is prior and fundamental to all others. Here your love should begin, here it should center, and then extends its lines to all parts of the circle of creation; therefore, no more plead your innocence. If you had never committed one sin beside in all your life, this one of not loving God is sufficient to condemn you for ever to the lowest hell.—Further, This sin will appear more aggravated, if you consider that, by not loving God, you do in the strongest manner declare, that he has not these excellencies, but is a worthless Being, undeserving of your love. When you do not love him, after all the discoveries he has made of himself to you, it is plain that this is the habitual sense of your hearts, that he has no excellency worthy of your love. This is the language of your hearts; and this language is much more strong and expressive than that of your lips. You may speak things inadvertently, which your second thoughts would retract; but by being all your life destitute of the love of God, you have all your life been declaring that you look upon him as a worthless Being, far inferior to a thousand things upon earth, to which you have given your love. Now you would not dare to utter such blasphemy as this,

and how can you dare to declare it, much more strongly by the temper of your hearts, and stand to it as a truth? O! will you never retract it by becoming a lover of God? My brethren, can you imagine a more shocking insolent wickedness than this? And what an hateful soul must that be that has been guilty of it all its days! What is this but to say with the atheistic fool, No God? for he is not God, if he be not supremely excellent and amiable? and if you wish there were no God, what do you do but wish universal desolation, and imprecate destruction to yourself, and every other being? for were there no God, there could be nothing else; there would not have been one spark of being through infinite space in any point of duration.

2. Your not loving God is a most unnatural wickedness. He is your Father; and that in a higher sense than your earthly parents can be. He is the Author of your bodies, because it was he that first established, and still continues in force, those laws of generation, by which they were produced; and had it not been for this, men could no more produce one another than a stone or a clod of earth. As to your souls, the nobler part of your persons, they are his immediate offspring, produced by him without the instrumentality of secondary causes, of any pre-existent materials. Thus he is your Father in the highest sense; and yet you have not loved him! You have not loved him who gave you the power of love! You have not loved him, from whose creative hands you came a few years ago! What an unnatural wickedness is this! What were you an hundred years ago? You were nothing; and you would have continued so to all eternity, had he not spoke you into being. And yet you have not sincerely loved him to this moment! Most astonishing! Must you not tremble at and abominate yourselves as the vilest and most unnatural monsters? Should the child that received his being from you in a subordinate sense, the child you dandled upon your knees, and for whom you are now laboriously making provision, should he hate the sight of you, shun your com-

pany, and do nothing to please you, how would you take it? Would you not think the unnatural miscreant unworthy of life? And yet thus you have treated your Heavenly Father, to whom you were under much higher, and more endearing obligations. You have treated him as only a despised broken idol, in whom you could take no pleasure. And are you pleased with yourselves notwithstanding? shall not such a shocking prodigy, at which angels gaze with horror, be struck with horror at itself?—Should all the world treat God as you have done, what would be the consequence? Why, there would not be one lover of God to be found among all the numerous race of man. And yet, if you have a right to hate him, they have too. Have you any peculiar indulgence in this case? Can you produce an exemption from that universal law, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart?* &c. You see then whither your conduct leads, and do you not shudder to think of it? And can you imagine yourselves innocent still? Do you think you have tolerably good hearts for all? I am sure your reason, if it be not entirely lost, will not allow you to think so.

3. This is a most ungrateful wickedness. Think what God has done for you; how many mercies he has given you, as many mercies as moments; think how many deliverances he has wrought for you; see what a well-furnished world he has formed for your accommodation.—Think. O think of the love and sufferings of Jesus; see the abasement, the labours, the hardships of his life; see the agonies of his crucifixion; see the crown of thorns, the mangled visage, the disjointed limbs, the flowing blood, the bursting heart, the dying pangs of your blessed Redeemer. O! think upon, and view these things, and then say, what do you think of your enmity against him after all this? Can ingratitude rise to a higher pitch? O! is this your return for all the kindness of God? for all the love of Jesus? There was something very cutting in his question to the Jews, *Many good works have I done among you.* I have never provoked you by any thing but good works; *and for which of these do you*

stone me? John x. 32. This may be easily accommodated to you. Many kind actions has he done to you, many grievous sufferings has he undergone for you; and for which of these do you hate him? O must not such an expostulation wound you to the heart, and melt you down at his feet in the deepest repentance? O! can you continue enemies to the very cross of Christ? Must not that disarm your resentment, and dissolve your hearts, hard as they are, into the most tender love?

4. This is a most comprehensive wickedness. You are repeatedly told that love is the fulfilling of the law. Rom. xiii. 8, 10. James xi. 8. The first and great commandment upon which (with a like precept with regard to our neighbour) the whole law and the prophets depend, is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*, &c. that is, love is the root, the principle, the substance of all obedience, because it constrains a man to a cheerful observance of every divine precept, and naturally disposes him to a dutiful conduct. Now if love be the fulfilling of the whole law, it follows that the want of love is the breach of the whole law: it is dashing the two tables of the law in pieces at once. As love is the principle of all obedience, so enmity is the principle of all disobedience; and while this reigns in your hearts, it diffuses a deadly poison through every thing you do; and you cannot perform one action acceptable to God. All your endeavours are but the treacherous flattery of an enemy, or the forced homage of a rebel obliged to feign submission. In short, the want of love to God is the want of every thing that is morally good: it is the root of all evil; it is a complication of all wickedness; a summary, nay, I may say, the sum total of all disobedience and rebellion. And can you any longer build your hopes on the fewness or smallness of your sins? Alas! while you are possessed of this temper, your hearts are full of every evil. This renders not only your actions, your words, and thoughts of every kind, guilty and vile, but the stated, settled bent and disposition of your minds, most wicked and abomina-

ble*. And must you not fall on your faces before your injured Sovereign, and cry Guilty, guilty?—But,

5. This is a most inexcusable wickedness. Your mouth must be stopped, and you have no plea left to excuse or extenuate it. You cannot plead here, as you do in some other things, "There are so many different denominations in the world, so many different opinions about religion, that I know not what to choose;" for here, as I told you, all are agreed. They are all unanimous in this, that love to God is essential to religion. Not only all denominations of christians, but Jews, Mahometans, Heathens, and all that believe the existence of a God, confess this. And are you of a religion that does not include the love of God in it? It is the religion of devils, or rather it is the most diabolical irreligion. I insist the more boldly upon this point, because it is a catholic truth, free from all suspicion of party. You cannot plead that you have no time for the exercise of love to God; for love is not the work of the hands, but of the heart; and may be performed while you are engaged in other business. Can you not think affectionately of a friend behind a counter, or over a plough? So you might love God, and yet follow your daily employments.—Nor can you excuse yourselves from your inability; for God has implanted the passion of love in your nature, and you find it easy to love other things: you can love the world, you can love a child or a friend, and why cannot you love God? The act of love is the same in both cases, and one would think it would be an easier thing for you to love him who is the Supreme Excellence, than imperfect creatures, whose excellency is limited, or mingled with many hateful qualities. Whence then is your inability in this case? It is nothing else but the strength of you enmity; that is, you are so disaffected to the ever-blessed God, that you cannot love him; and does this lessen your crime? Do the invete-

* When the omniscient God views you asleep, when all the powers of action are suspended, what can he say of you but this, "Here lies an enemy of God?"

racy and rancour of your enmity excuse it? Alas! that is its most dreadful aggravation. O! how wicked must you be when you are so disaffected to the God that made you, and the Saviour that died for you, that you cannot prevail upon your hearts to love him! Farther, Have you tried what can be done to root out and subdue this enmity by the power of the holy Spirit? Have you cried to God in earnest prayer, and used all means for that end? If not, it is plain you are an enemy to God, and love to continue so: you hate him, and practically insist upon it, you do right. Nor can you pretend ignorance in this case; for your own conscience tells you, it is your duty to love God. In short, you are intirely inexcusable: you sin against the full conviction of your own minds, and you must join with God, angels, and men, in your own condemnation.

6. This temper, if it continue, will certainly exclude you from the kingdom of heaven. Alas! what would you do there with your disaffected hearts? Heaven would be an enemy's country to you. What pleasure could you have in the society or service of that God whom you hate? in those exercises and enjoyments for which you have no relish? Could you be happy in the practice of eternal flattery, bowing and singing insincere complimental praises to an enemy? Could you affect the society there? There is not one like you in all that innumerable assembly: they all love that God whom you disgust. And with what pleasure could you mingle among them? How could you live in a country where the laws, the customs, the employments, the disposition of the inhabitants, are all contrary to your temper? O! you need no sentence from your Judge to exclude you, you would exclude yourselves, and choose to mingle with your fellow-devils:—Which leads me to add,

7. This temper, if it continue, will certainly lead you to hell. You are fit for no other place. Where should the enemies of God be, but in an infernal prison? There is the same propriety in it as in shutting up madmen in bedlam, or rebels in a dungeon. Why, you are devilized already; you have the very temper of devils: enmity to God is the grand constituent of

a devil; the worst ingredient in that infernal composition; and this you have in your hearts, and, as it were, incorporated with your habitual temper. And what do you think will become of you? Judge yourselves, must you not be doomed to that everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels, whom you resemble?

Here I must subjoin, that if ever you are brought to love God, it must be in this world. In heaven and hell no new dispositions are planted; but those that are found prevalent in the soul will ripen and grow to perfection. None begin to grow wicked in hell, or to love God in heaven: the seeds are all sown in the present state, which then spring up to maturity. Therefore, if you would ever have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, now, now is the time; now or never.

But, "What means, "you will say," shall I use for this purpose?"—Here I must be but short: but if you are really in earnest, you will easily understand the shortest hints.

1. Labour to be deeply sensible of the aggravated sinfulness and danger of your present state. Deeply impress your minds with this. Check the levity of your minds, and indulge a serious, anxious, sorrowful temper; for your case really requires it.

2. Be deeply sensible of the necessity of divine grace to change your hearts, and inspire you with divine love. The disease is so far gone, you cannot heal yourselves; but, blessed be God, He is able, He is able to make such an enemy as you his hearty friend and dutiful subject. Therefore,

3. Betake yourselves to earnest prayer; and confess your guilt, your vileness, your liableness to divine displeasure: cry for his Spirit to shed abroad his love in your hearts: here let your petitions center; for this is the main thing. Endeavour to devote yourselves to him, to give up your disaffected hearts to him, to bow that rebellious soul at his feet.

4. Meditate upon the glory of God, his kindness to you, the love and sufferings of Christ, and such subjects as tend to beget and inflame your love to him.

5. Be not weary in the use of these means, but persevere, hold on, till you find a thorough change produced in your hearts. Your eternal All is concerned; therefore be not remiss and careless; be not soon tired or discouraged. Never give over till your last breath; and who knows but that hostile spirit of yours may soon become the friend of God, and at length shine among His celestial friends in all their transcendent glories and ineffable and eternal felicity! Amen.

SERMON XLVIII.

The Nature and Author of Regeneration.

JOHN iii. 7.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

THOSE doctrines are not always most absurd in themselves, nor strange to a well-informed mind, which are most wondered at in the world. Ignorance is apt to wonder, where knowledge discovers nothing amazing or unaccountable. To support our observations, proofs might be given; but it is to my present purpose to take notice of only one, one that excited from Nicodemus wonder, about 1700 years ago, and is still wondered at; nay more, is ridiculed in an ignorant world: I mean the doctrine of Regeneration, or the New Birth.

Nicodemus comes to Christ with a conviction of his high character as a Teacher from God, who attested his commission by the strong and popular evidence of miracles. From such a teacher he expects sublime instructions; and from his own improvements in Jewish learning, he no doubt flatters himself he shall be able to comprehend them: but when, instead of gratifying his curiosity by telling him strange and great things of the kingdom of the Messiah, as a secular Prince, and a mighty Conqueror, as he and his countrymen expected, or discoursing like a Rabbi on the Jewish law; I say, when, instead of this, Jesus opens the conference by a solemn and authoritative declaration of the necessity of something under the name of another birth, how is Nicodemus surprized! This he cannot understand. This seems strange, new doctrine to him; and he has an objection ready against it, as an absurdity and an impossibility: *How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?*

This objection, which was altogether impertinent, and founded upon a gross mistaken notion of the doctrine, may serve as a specimen of all the objections that have been made against this doctrine ever since; they have all proceeded from ignorance, or from gross mistaken notions of an evident truth; and hence men have imagined, like this master of Israel, that they reasoned strongly against it, when in reality they were saying nothing at all to the purpose, and did not so much as understand the case.

Our condescending Lord took a great deal of pains to give Nicodemus right notions of this doctrine. For this purpose he presents it before him in various views. He tells him, he did not mean a second natural birth, but a birth of water and of the spirit—a birth that renders a man spiritual, and consequently fit for that spiritual kingdom he was about to erect; and that the free and sovereign Spirit of God, the Author of this new birth, operated like *the wind, which bloweth where it listeth.* Nicodemus still continues gazing at him, and wondering what he should mean. He is puzzled, after all, and asks, *How can these things be?* Jesus tells him the wonder did not lie in the doctrine, but in his ignorance of it, when he was a teacher of the law: *Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things!*

The connection of my text is this: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit: therefore marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.* That is to say, "The doctrine you are so much surprized at, is not at all absurd, so as to make you wonder to hear it from my mouth. You cannot but know, that all mankind are born of the flesh; that is, propagated in a way that communicates a depraved nature to them; and hence, they are flesh; that is, corrupt and carnal, and therefore wholly unfit to be admitted into my kingdom, which is pure and spiritual. But that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; that is, spiritual and holy: and therefore fit for that spiritual and holy kingdom which I am come to set up. Now, if this be the case, you have certainly no need to marvel at this doctrine:

can it seem strange to you, that impure, unholy creatures must be changed, before they can be fit members of so holy a society? Can you marvel at this? No; you would have more reason to marvel at the contrary."

It is one part of my design to-day to inquire whether the doctrine of the new birth be indeed such a strange, absurd, or impossible thing in itself, as to deserve that amazement, and indeed contempt, which it generally meets with in the world: or whether it be not rational, necessary, and worthy of universal acceptance? But before I enter upon this, it will be proper to inquire,

What the new birth is? And,

Who is the author of it?

And in what way does he generally produce it?

Remove your prejudices, my hearers, against this doctrine, suspend your disbelief, and cease to wonder at, or ridicule it, till these points be explained, lest you be found to speak evil of the things you know not.

I. Let us inquire, What it is to be born again?

To gain your attention to this inquiry, I need only put you in mind, that whatever be meant by the new birth, it is not an insignificant speculation, not the disputed peculiarity of a party, not the attainment of a few good men of the first class, but it is essential to every good man, and absolutely necessary to salvation. You cannot doubt of this, if you look upon Jesus Christ as a person of common veracity, and worthy of credit in his most solemn declarations; for he has declared, over and over again, with the utmost solemnity, that *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.* John iii. 3, 5, and 7. Attend then, if you think your eternal salvation worthy of your attention.

The phrase, *to be born again*, like most other expressions used upon divine subjects, is metaphorical, and brings in natural things, with which we are familiarly acquainted, to assist our conceptions of divine things, which might otherwise be above our comprehension. We all know what it is to be born; and our

knowledge of this may help us to understand what it is to be born again. As by our first birth we become men, or partake of human nature; so, by our second birth we become christians, and are made partakers of a divine and spiritual nature. As our first birth introduces us into this world, and into human society, so our second birth introduces us into the church of Christ, and makes us true members of that holy society. As by our first birth we resemble our parents, at least in the principal lineaments of human nature; so by our second birth we are made partakers of the divine nature; that is, we are made to resemble the blessed God in holiness; or as St. Paul expresses it, *we are renewed after his image in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.* Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10. The effect is like its cause; the child like the parent. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit**. In our first birth we are endowed with child-like and filial dispositions towards our human parents; and when we are born of God, we are inspired with a child-like and filial temper towards him, as our heavenly Father. By our natural birth we are placed in an imperfect, but growing state. We have all the powers of human nature, though none of them in perfection; but from that time they grow and improve, till they at length arrive to maturity. In like manner, in our second birth, all the principles of virtue and grace are implanted; but their growth and improvement is the work of the christian life; and from that time they continue gradually growing, though with many interruptions, till at death they arrive at maturity and perfection. In our natural birth we pass through a very great change. The infant that had lain in darkness, breathless and almost insensible, and with little more than a vegetative life, enters into a new state, feels new sensations, craves a new kind of nourishment, and discovers new powers. In like manner, in the second birth, the sinner passes through a great change; a change as to his view of divine things; as

* Flesh of flesh, and spirit of spirit. This is according to the established laws of generation, by which every thing begets its like.

to his temper, his practice, and his state; a change so great, that he may with propriety be denominated another man, or a new creature. As I shall adjust my discourse to the narrow limits of an hour, I must pass over, or but slightly touch upon all the particulars suggested by the metaphor in my text, except the last, which is the most comprehensive and instructive; namely, That the new birth implies a great change in the views, the temper, the practice, and the state of the sinner; and under this head, sundry of the other particulars may be reduced.

The various forms of expression, which the scripture uses to represent what is here called a second birth, all conspire to teach us, that it consists in a great change. It is represented as a resurrection, or a change from death to life: *You hath he quickened*, saith St. Paul, *who were dead in trespasses and sins*. Ephes. ii. 1. It is represented as a new creation: *If any man be in Christ*, says the same inspired author, *he is a new creature: old things are past away; and behold, all things are become new*. 2 Cor. v. 17. *Put on*, says he, *the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness*. Ephes. iv. 24. These and like expressions signify a very great change: and such forms of speech are very commonly used in the same sense; which shews they are so far from being ridiculous, that they are agreeable to the common sense of mankind. When we see a man that we once knew, look, and speak, and act as he used to do, it is customary to say, "He is the old man still." But if we see a great alteration in his appearance, his temper, or behaviour, we are apt to say, "He is a new man;" or, "He is quite another creature." When we see a rugged boisterous man become meek and inoffensive, we are apt to say, "He is become a mere child." These forms of speech are so significant and popular, that they have even passed into proverbs, and that in various countries and languages; and hence they are used in the scriptures as plain and familiar representations of this great truth. And hence we are bold to use them, in spite of that senseless ridicule and contempt, which some would cast upon them; but

which rebounds upon themselves, for censuring modes of expression that are not only sacred, but agreeable to common sense.

Now, since it is evident the new birth signifies a great change, you are impatient, by this time, I hope, to know more particularly what it is. It is the change of a thoughtless, ignorant, hard-hearted, rebellious sinner, into a thoughtful, well-informed, tender-hearted, dutiful servant of God. It is the implantation of the seeds or principles of every grace and virtue in a heart that was entirely destitute of them, and full of sin. The sinner that was wont to have no practical affectionate regard for the great God, is now made to revere, admire, and love him, as the greatest and best of Beings; to rejoice in him as his supreme happiness, and cheerfully to submit to him as his Ruler. Formerly his temper and conduct would better agree to the infidelity of an atheist than to the faith of a christian: but now, he thinks, and speaks, and acts, as one that really believes there is a God; a God who inspects all his ways, and will call him to an account. The heart that was wont to disgust the holiness of the divine law, and murmur at the strictness of its precepts, now loves it; loves it for that very reason for which it was wont to hate it; namely, because it is so holy. This was the temper of the Psalmist: *Thy word is very pure; therefore* (that is, on that very account) *thy servant loveth it*, Psal. cxix. 140; and of St. Paul, *The law is holy, and the commandment is holy*—and what follows? *I delight*, (says he,) *in the law of God after the inner man. And I consent unto the law, that it is good.* Rom. vii. 12, 16, 22. The haughty, stubborn, deceitful heart, is now made humble, pliable, simple, and honest, like that of a little child. Hence Christ says, *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. But whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.* Matt. xviii. 3, 4. This was also the temper of David: *Lord, my heart is not haughty—surely I have behaved myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a*

weaned child. Psal. cxxxi. 1, 2. The heart that used to have no delight in communion with God, but lived as without God in the world, now feels a filial desire to draw near to him, and address him with the humble boldness and freedom of a child. *Because ye are sons,* says St. Paul, *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father,* Gal. iv. 6.; that is, Father, Father: the repetition of so tender a name intimates the greatest endearment and affectionate freedom. The heart that had no realizing affecting views of a future state, now feels the energy of that doctrine, and looks upon heaven and hell as indeed the most important realities. The heart that was once earthly and sensual, eagerly set upon things below, as its main pursuit, is now taught to aspire to heaven; in heaven is its treasure, and there it will be. The thoughts that were once scattered among a thousand trifles, are now frequently collected, and fixed upon the great concerns of religion. Now also the heart is remarkably altered towards the Lord Jesus: formerly it seemed sufficient to wear his name, to profess his religion, to believe him to be the Saviour of the world, to insert his name in a prayer now and then, and to give a formal attendance upon the institutions of his worship; but O! now he appears in a more important and interesting light. Now the sinner is deeply sensible that he is indeed the only Saviour, and he most eagerly embraces him under that endearing character, and intrusts his eternal all in his hands. Now he appears to him all lovely and glorious, and his heart is for ever captivated with his beauty. Now he prays, and longs, and languishes for him, and feels him to be all in all. O! now the very thought of being without Christ, kills him. Thus, *God, who first commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,* 2 Cor. iv. 6.; in that face where it shines with the fairest beams. Now also the man has very different views of himself: he sees himself to be a guilty, depraved, vile creature, all over-run with sin, and destitute of all goodness, but, as it is wrought

in him by divine grace, how different is this from the proud self-righteous estimate he was wont to form of himself! His views of sin are also quite different from what they used to be: he used to look upon it as a slight excusable evil, except when it broke out into some gross acts. But now he sees it to be unspeakably vile and base, in every instance and degree. An evil thought, a corrupt motion of desire, an indisposed heart towards God, appears to him a shocking evil, such as nothing but the infinite mercy of God can forgive, and even that mercy, upon no other account but that of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He sees it does most justly deserve everlasting punishment; and he is often lost in wonder that the gospel should open a door of hope even for him who has been so deeply guilty. It breaks his heart to think that he indulged so base a thing so long; and he can never be fully reconciled to himself, while he feels the remains of it within him. His repentance now takes a new turn. Formerly he was entirely under the influence of self-love, and therefore, when he had any concern for his sin, it entirely proceeded from the servile principle of fear; fear of the punishment, and not hatred of the crime. But now his soul is ennobled with more generous principles: now he can mourn over sin, as a base ungrateful evil, even when he has no thoughts of the punishment: now he can mourn over sin as against God, and not only as against a sin-punishing, but as against a sin-pardoning God. Now he mourns with generous sorrow over pardoned sin; and God's being so good as to forgive him, is so far from lessening the evil of sin in his view, that this very consideration peculiarly affects him. O! that he should be so base as to sin against a God who is so gracious as to forgive him after all! This thought breaks his heart; and God's forgiving him, is a reason why he can never forgive himself. The heart has also a new temper in the duties of religion: it can no more indulge an habitual coldness or lukewarmness in them, but exerts its powers to the utmost; and, when it has a languishing interval, it cannot be easy in that condition, but tries to rouse itself again. Experience

teaches that it is good to draw near to God; and the ordinances of the gospel are not tiresome formalties, as they were wont to be, but the means of life and refreshment; and they are its happiest hours which are spent in attending upon them. Now the gospel is not that dull, stale, neglected tale it once was, but the most joyful tidings that ever came from heaven. As a new-born babe, the regenerate soul desires the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby, 1 Pet. ii. 2.; and it is esteemed more than necessary food. Now the careless secure soul, that was always cautious of over-doing in religion, and flattered itself there was no need of being so much in earnest, is effectually roused, and strives in earnest to enter in at the strait gate, convinced both of the difficulty and necessity of entering. Now religion is no longer a matter by the by, but a serious business; and every thing that comes in competition with it must give way to it. The man is resolved to save his soul at all adventures; and this, he is now convinced, is no easy work. To sum up the whole, for I can only give a few specimens of particulars, the regenerate soul is changed universally in every part. I do not mean the change is perfect in any part: alas! no; sin still lives, and sometimes make violent struggles, though crucified. The old man dies hard. But I mean, the change does really extend to every part. The soul is in no respect the same it was wont to be, as to the concerns of religion. It has new views, new sensations, new joys, new sorrows, new inclinations, and aversions, new hopes and fears: in short, as the apostle tell us, *all things are become new*, 2 Cor. v. 17.; and according to his inspired prayer, *the whole man, soul, body and spirit, is sanctified.* 1 Thes. v. 23.

By way of confirmation, let me add a few characters of a regenerate man, which are expressly scriptural. *Every one that loveth, is born of God*, saith St. John, 1 John iv. 7. That is, every new-born soul is possessed with a generous love to all mankind, which prompts it to observe the whole law in its conduct towards them *(for love is the fulfilling of the whole law)* and restrains it from doing them any injury;

(for love worketh no evil to his neighbour.) Rom. xii. 10. This love extends not only to friends, but also to strangers, and even to enemies. It is a friendship to human nature in general; it spreads over the whole earth, and embraces the whole race of man. But as the righteous are the more excellent ones of the earth, it terminates upon them in a peculiar degree: and the reason is obvious; they are, in a peculiar sense, the saints brethren, the children of the same heavenly Father; and they bear a resemblance to him: and if he loves the Original, he must also love the Copy. Thus, says St. John, *Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.* 1 John v. 1.

Another character of regeneration the same apostle gives you, 1 John v. 4, 5.; and that is, victory over the world by faith. *Every one that is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* That is, Whatever temptations may arise from the riches, honours, or pleasures of the world, or from the society of mankind, the man that is born of God has such believing views of eternal things, as constrains him to conflict with them, and overcome them. He has not such a mean dastardly soul, as to yield to opposition. He is enabled by divine grace to brave dangers, and encounter difficulties in so good a cause: he dares to be wise and happy, though all the world should turn against him. O what a change is this from his former temper!

Another distinguishing characteristic of the new birth, is, universal holiness of practice, or a conscientious observance of every known duty, and an honest zealous resistance of every known sin. There is no known duty, however unfashionable, disagreeable, or dangerous, but what the true convert honestly endeavours to perform; and there is no known sin, however customary, pleasing, or gainful, but what he honestly resists, and from which he labours to abstain. This necessarily follows from what has been said; for when the principles of action are changed within, the

course of action will be changed too. When the heart is made holy, it will infallibly produce habitual holiness of practice. A good tree must bring forth good fruit. This St. John asserts in the strongest manner, and in various forms. "*We know*, (says he,) *that every one that doth righteousness*; that is, that habitually practiseth righteousness, *is born of God*, 1 John ii. 29.: *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not;* that is, he sinneth not habitually, so as he may be denominated a sinner by way of distinction; *but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself;* that is, keepeth himself from the infection of sin; *and that wicked one toucheth him not.* 1 John v. 18. "*Little children*, (says he,) *let no man deceive you: he that doth righteousness is righteous—But he that committeth sin is of the devil, Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; i. e.* as I explained it before, he does not habitually sin in the general tenor of his practice, so as to make sin his distinguishing character; *for his seed remaineth in him;* that is, the principles of grace, implanted in him in regeneration, are immortal, and will never suffer him to give himself up to sin as formerly; *and he cannot sin because he is born of God:* his being born of God happily disables him for ever from abandoning himself to sin again. *In this the children of God are manifest; and the children of the devil;* that is, this is the grand distinguishing characteristic existing between them, *Whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God*, 1 John iii. 7—10. You see then a holy practice is one of the most certain signs of regeneration; and therefore in vain do such pretend to it, or boast of high attainments in inward experimental religion, who are not holy in all manner of conversation, and do not live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world.

By this time, I hope, my brethren, you understand what it is to be born again. And now, upon a review of the subject, there are several things of importance, which I would submit to your consideration.

First, I leave you now to consider, whether baptism

be the same thing with regeneration, or the new birth, in the scripture sense. I grant that baptism is a sacramental sign of regeneration, just as the Lord's Supper is a sacramental sign of the body and blood of Christ; and therefore, baptism may be called regeneration, by the same figure which Christ uses when he says of the bread, *This is my body.* In this metonymical sense, this method of speaking has been used by many great and good men; and when they call baptism regeneration, they only mean, that it is an outward sign of it, just as the sacramental bread, for the same reason, is called the body of Christ. Were it always used in this sense, it would hardly be worth while to take notice of it as an impropriety; though I must confess, I cannot find the same form of speech indisputably used concerning baptism in the Bible. But when men are taught that the whole of that regeneration or new birth, which the scripture requires as absolutely necessary to salvation, means no more than just being baptized; and when they that have been baptized, begin to think that they have no more to do with the new birth, the error is too dangerous to be passed over in silence. I shall just lead you into a track of thought, by which you may easily make yourselves judges in this controversy. If baptism be regeneration in the scripture sense, then, whatever the scripture says concerning persons regenerated, born again, or created anew, will also hold true concerning persons baptized. This is so plain a principle, that it is hard to make it plainer; for if baptism be the same with regeneration, the new birth, or the new creation, then the same things may be said of it. Proceeding upon this obvious principle, let us make the trial in a few instances. It may be truly said of him that is born of God, in the scripture sense, that he does not habitually sin, *&c.* Now substitute baptized, instead of born of God, and consider how it will read, "Every one that is baptized sinneth not; but he that is baptized keepeth himself; and the evil one toucheth him not." Has this the appearance of truth? Do not all of you know so much of the conduct of many who have been baptized, as to see this most notoriously false? for where can we

find more audacious sinners upon earth, than many who have been baptized! Let us make another trial. *Whosoever is born of God*, in the scripture sense, *overcometh the world*. But will it hold true, that whosoever is baptized, overcometh the world? *If any man be in Christ*, in the scripture sense, *he is a new creature: old things are past away, and all things are become new*. But how will it sound if you read, *If any man be baptized, he is a new creature; old things are past away, and all things are become new?* Does baptism universally make such a change in the subject, as that it may, with any tolerable propriety, be called a new creation?—I might easily make the same experiment with many other passages of scripture; but these may suffice as a specimen. And now, must it not be as evident as any mathematical demonstration, that regeneration, or the new birth, in the scripture-sense is something else, something more divine, more intrinsical, more transformative of the whole man, than baptism? That man must labour to be deceived, who can work up himself to believe, after such a representation of the case, that if he has been baptized, he has all that regeneration which is necessary to his admission into the kingdom of heaven. I know no absurdity parallel to it, except the doctrine of transubstantiation, the characteristical absurdity of the church of Rome. Because Christ, in the distribution of the elements in the Eucharist, said of the bread, *This is my body*, putting the sign for the thing signified, therefore Papists conclude, the bread is substantially the very same with the body of Christ signified by it, though it still retains all the sensible properties of bread. Some Protestants have fallen into the same error as to the other sacrament of baptism, and that with less plausibility. I can find no scripture that says of baptism, "This is regeneration: and yet, they insist upon it, that it is the very thing; and make the sign and the thing signified one and the same.

Let me borrow a very plain and popular, and yet substantial argument from Limborch. "The great design of Christ's coming into the world was to renew and regenerate men: this is a work worthy of his

own immediate hand." And yet we are told *Jesus baptized not, but his disciples*, John iv. 2. "A plain evidence that he made a distinction between baptism and regeneration. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, *I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius.* 1 Cor. i. 14. "But if baptism be regeneration, his meaning must be, I thank God that I regenerated none of you.—But is this cause of thanksgiving? Could he give thanks to God that he had not regenerated any of them? *Christ*, says he, *sent me not to baptize:*—"but can we think Christ did not send the chief of the apostles to promote the great work of regeneration? He, elsewhere, calls himself their spiritual father," *for*, says he, *in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.* 1 Cor. iv. 15. "But if baptism be the new birth he could not have been their father, or begotten them, unless he had baptized them. From which it is evident, that St. Paul made a great difference between baptism and regeneration."

Therefore, let no man deceive you with vain words. Baptism is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, which you should think highly of; but do not put it out of its place, by substituting it for quite another thing. Believe it, this is not that kind of regeneration which you must be the subjects of, if you would enter into the kingdom of God.

Another thing which I would now leave to your consideration is, Whether regeneration, or the new birth, in the sense I have explained it, be not a rational, noble thing? And whether so great a change in a man's temper and conduct may not emphatically be called a new birth? When a man is born again, the ruins of his nature are repaired, and every noble and divine grace and virtue are implanted in his heart. His heart is made capable of generous sensations; his understanding has suitable views of the most interesting and sublime objects; and his temper and behaviour are rightly formed towards God and man. In short, the mean, depraved, earth-born creature, is made an infant-angel; nay, St. Peter tells you, *he is made partaker of the divine nature.* 2 Pet. i. 4. What

a glorious and surprizing change is this! Should you see a clod of earth rising from under your feet, and brightening into a sun, it would not be so glorious a transformation. This change gives a man the very temper of heaven, and prepares him for the enjoyments and employments of that sacred region.

Therefore, *marvel not that I say unto you, ye must be born again.* Do not gaze and wonder at me, as if I told you some strange, new, absurd thing, when I tell you, you must be regenerated in the manner I have explained, if ever you would enter into the kingdom of heaven. Consult your own reason and experience—and they will tell you, that as heaven is the region of perfect holiness, and as you are indisputably corrupted, depraved creatures, you must be so changed, as to be made holy; or in other words, you must be born again, before you can enjoy the happiness of that holy place: or consult the Bible, which you must own to be true, or own yourselves to be the most gross hypocrites in professing the christian religion; consult your Bible, I say, and you will find the absolute necessity of being born again asserted in the strongest terms. Need I remind you of the solemn asseveration of Christ in my context, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven!* The same blessed lips have assured us, that, *except we be converted, and become as little children, we cannot enter into his kingdom.* Matt. xviii. 2. St. Paul speaks in the same strain: *If any man be in Christ,* as we all must before we can be saved by him, *he is a new creature,* &c. *We are his workmanship,* says he, *created in Christ Jesus to good works.* Eph. ii. 10. *In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but the new creature.* All external forms of religion, whether Jewish or christian, are of no avail, without this new creation. Gal. vi. 15. This is also more than intimated in that comprehensive promise of the Old Testament (Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26.) *A new heart will I give you; and a new spirit will I put within you,* &c. And are not these repeated declarations sufficient to convince you of the necessity of this

great change? Will you any more marvel, when you are told, you must be born again! No, rather marvel to hear the contrary: it may make you wonder indeed, to be told, that an unholy sinner, without any change, is fit for the presence of a holy God; fit to relish the holy enjoyments of heaven; and capable of being happy in what is directly contrary to his nature. This would be strange, absurd doctrine indeed; and whereever you hear it, you may justly wonder at it, and despise such nonsense.

Now if this be true, that *except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,* then it will follow, that just as many persons in this assembly as have been born again, just so many are in a state of favour with God, and prepared for the happiness of heaven. And, on the other hand, just as many as are unregenerate, just so many lie dead in sin, under the wrath of God, and liable to everlasting misery. Let each of you particularly admit this conviction: "if I am not born again, I have not the least ground to hope for happiness in my present state."

Upon this follows another inquiry, of the utmost importance; and that is, Whether you have ever experienced the blessed change of the new birth? Have your views, your dispositions, and your conduct been changed in the manner described? and can you lay claim to those distinguishing characters of a regenerate soul, which have been mentioned? Pause, and think seriously; recollect your past experiences; look into your own hearts; observe the tenor of your practice; and from the whole, endeavour to gather an honest answer to this grand question, "Have I ever been born again?"

If you can answer this in your favour, St. Peter will tell you the happy consequence; and I shall only desire you to read those most comfortable verses, 1 Pet i. 3—6. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope,—to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith*

unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time; wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.

But if, on the other hand, you find you have never been born again, what is to be done? Must you lie still in that condition? or should you try to get out of it? I am sure my design in endeavouring to let you see your condition, is, that you may escape out of it, and be happy; and if you are so kind to yourselves as to concur with me in this design, I hope, through divine grace, we shall succeed. This introduces the next inquiry, namely,

II. Who is the Author of this divine change, called the new birth?

The change is so great, so noble, and divine, that from thence alone we may infer it can be produced only by divine power. And the nature of man in its present state, is so corrupt and weak, that it is neither inclined nor able to produce it. It is also uniformly ascribed to God in the sacred writings. The regenerate soul is repeatedly said to be born of God; *born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* John i. 13. *All things are become new,* says St. Paul, *and all things* (that is, all these new things) *are of God.* 2 Cor. v. 17, 18. *Every good gift, and every perfect gift,* says St. James, *is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,—who of his own will hath begotten us with the word of truth.* James i. 17, 18. The spirit is repeatedly mentioned as the author of the new birth, in the chapter where my text lies. This may suffice for the proof of so plain a point.

Here then, sinners, you see to whom you must look for this blessing. You can no more regenerate yourselves, than you could beget yourselves at first. And this you must be deeply sensible of. But he that made you at first is able to new-make you, and to repair his own workmanship, which you have demolished. And it is He who has actually changed many a heart in our guilty world.—Here the next inquiry comes in very seasonably, namely,

III. In what way does this divine agent produce this change?

He is pleased to use such variety, as to circumstances, that I cannot take time to describe them. But as to the substance of the work, which is the same in all adults, he generally carries it on in the following manner. The first step is, to convince the sinner of his need of this change, by discovering to him his guilt and danger, and particularly the universal corruption of his nature. He is roused out of a state of stupid security by an affecting view of the holiness of God, of the purity of his law, of the terror of its penalty, of the great evil of sin, and of his own exposedness to the divine displeasure upon the account of it. Upon this he becomes sad and serious, uneasy in his mind, and anxious about his condition. He endeavours to reform his life; he prays, and uses the other means of grace with earnestness unknown before. And when he has gone on in this course for some time, he begins perhaps to flatter himself, that now he is in a safe condition. But alas! he does not yet know the worst of himself. Therefore the holy Spirit opens his eyes to see the inward universal corruption of his whole soul, and that a mere outward reformation is far from being a sufficient cure of a disease so inveterate. Hereupon the awakened sinner betakes himself to the use of the means of grace with redoubled vigour and earnestness, and strives to change the principles of action within. But alas! he finds his heart is a stubborn thing, and altogether unmanageable to him; and after repeated strivings to no purpose, he is effectually convinced of his own inability, and the absolute necessity of the exertion of divine power to make him truly good. Therefore he lies at the throne of grace, as a poor, helpless, anxious sinner, entirely at mercy, and unable to relieve himself. It would take up more time than I can allow, to describe the various exercises, the anxious fears, and eager pantings, the strong cries and tears of a soul in this condition. What I have hinted may put such of you in mind of them, as have never been the subjects of them. While the sinner lies in this desponding situation, it pleases God to pity him. Now

the important hour is come, when the old man must be crucified; when the divine and immortal principles must be implanted in a heart full of sin; and when the dead sinner must begin to live a holy aad divine life. The great God instantaneously changes the whole soul, and gives it a new, a heavenly turn. In short, now is wrought that important change, which I have already described, which is called the new birth, and denominates the man a new creature.

Here again you may furnish yourselves with materials for self-examination. If you have been born again, you have thus felt the pangs of the new birth, and seen your guilty, sinful, and dangerous condition in a true light. And can you put your hand upon your heart, and say, "Here is the heart that has been the subject of this operation?"

Hence also may be gathered some proper directions for such as are in a state of nature, how to attain the new birth.

Endeavour to be thoroughly acquainted with the corruption of your nature: it is from this that the necessity of a new birth proceeds.

Be fully convinced of the indispensable necessity of this change to your salvation.

Break off from, and forsake whatever tends to obstruct the new birth; as excessive worldly cares, bad company, and in short, all sin.

Seriously use all the means of grace; as, earnest prayer, attentive hearing of the word, &c.

Persevere in so doing, till your endeavours are crowned with success. And particularly, do not grow impatient of those anxieties and fears that will at first attend your pursuit.

These short hints may suffice by way of direction, if you are sincerely desirous of being directed. And what do you determine to do? Will you not resolve to seek after this important change, upon which your eternal All depends? O! let us part to-day fully determined upon this, that we will implore the power and mercy of God to create in us clean hearts, and renew within us right spirits.

SERMON XLIX.

The divine Life in the Souls of Men considered.

GAL. ii. 20.

I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ that liveth in me: and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God—

THE principal design of St. Paul in this Epistle, is to assert his divine mission, in opposition to the insinuations of the judaizing seducers that had intruded into the Galatian church; and to prove the justification of a sinner to be only through the merit of Christ's righteousness, and the instrumentality of faith. To confirm the latter, he argues, Gal. ii. 15, 16, from the case of the apostles and Jewish christians in general: *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.* And, Gal. ii. 19. he explicitly declares his own case in particular, as agreeing with theirs. *I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God;* that is, by the knowledge of the perfection of the law, as to its extent and spirituality; I am utterly unhinged and thrown off from all dependence on the works of the law for justification, and from expecting strength to yield obedience to be conveyed, according to the covenant of works;—and God's design in bringing me off from this dependence, and mine in relinquishing it, is not that I may turn libertine, and cast off all obligations to obedience, but that I may, by strength derived from Christ, devote myself wholly to him, and make my life a series of obedience to his will.

He goes on relating his own case in the text; in which you may observe these truths:

First, "That believers are endowed with spiritual activity; or, That they are enabled to serve God, and perform good works." This is intimated by two expressions, *I am crucified*, and, *I live;* which, though they seem contradictory, do really mean the same thing. *I am crucified*, signifies the mortification of indwelling sin, the subduction and extirpation of corrupt principles and inclinations: and he calls the mortification of these the crucifixion of himself *(I am crucified)* because of their intimate inhesion with his very nature; they were a sort of self to him. We have a like expression used, and explained by himself in Rom. vi. 6. *Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* Now the mortification of sin is a part of the service of God, at least a necessary pre-requisite. So the apostle reasons in Rom. vi. 2, 6, 11. *How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.* The other expression, *I live*, signifies spiritual activity; a vigorous, persevering serving of God; a living unto God (as it is explained v. 19. and Rom. vi. 11.) Life as ascribed to a rational being, imports not only a continuance in existence, in which sense inanimate things may be said to live, but especially a power of rational operation frequently exercised;—and when attributed to a morally upright being, as such, it imports more than some kind of power of operation, namely, a vital principle of spiritual and holy operation, and the frequent persevering exercise of it. Such a principle or power is very significantly called Life, to denote its intimacy in the soul, its vivacity, and permanency.

Secondly, We may observe, that "the vital principle of holiness in believers, whereby they are enabled to serve God, is communicated to them through Christ only as Mediator. This is intimated by that expression, *I am crucified with Christ;* that is, sin is crucified in me by virtue of the crucifixion of Christ; from the merits of his death my strength to subdue sin results;

and the mortification of it is the certain consequent of his sufferings, because thereby divine grace was purchased and insured for his chosen, to be communicated at the time appointed. To the same purpose he speaks in Gal. ii. 14. Far be it from me *that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom* [or by which*] *the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.* This is also asserted in the emphatical epanorthosis, *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:* that is, spiritual life is formally in me, but it is not self-originated; it does not result from my natural principles (which are so essential to me, that I may represent them under the personal pronoun *I*) but was first implanted, and is still supported and cherished by the power and grace of God through Christ; and it is in every respect so dependent upon him, and his influence is so intimately diffused through my soul, that I may say, *Christ liveth in me.* A like expression is used in Col. iii. 3, 4. *Christ is our life.*

Thirdly, we may take notice, "that believers receive supplies from Christ for the maintenance and nourishment of their spiritual life." *The life which I now live* (or, as it might be rendered more significantly, *what* I now live) *in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.*

So that the substance of the text is exhausted in these three doctrines, "That all true believers are endowed with an ability to serve God: That this ability was first communicated, and is still maintained through Christ only: and, That it is by faith they derive supplies from him, for the support and nourishment thereof."

You may observe I here reason from a particular to an universal, and infer that because these doctrines are true with respect to St. Paul, therefore they are true with respect to believers in general; and the scope of the text warrants this method of reasoning in this instance, which is confessedly fallacious in other cases; for St. Paul here introduces his own case with a design to represent and illustrate the case of believers in common; which he could not reasonably

* The relative may be referred to σταυρῷ, or to Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; and either way the sense is much the same.

have done, had not theirs been substantially the same with his in these respects. Besides, he declares these things of himself, not upon the account of any circumstances peculiar to himself, which might appropriate them to him; and therefore, though so eminent a saint might have peculiar degrees of them, yet as to their reality and kind, they equally belong to all true christians.

Nothing can be more profitable, nothing more necessary, than right notions about spiritual life. It is the main business of those that have it not to seek it, and of those that have it to cherish it; but how can they do either, if they know not what it is? Without it our religion is vain; we cannot serve the living God here, nor enjoy him hereafter; we are exposed to the eternal agonies of the second death, and our souls are pining under a spiritual decay, that will at length consume our vitals. How necessary then is spiritual life! And the necessity of the thing infers the necessity of the knowledge of it. The profession of it is the source of all vital religion; it is the health of the spirit; the ornament and perfection of the human nature; the grand pre-requisite to everlasting happiness; the dawn of celestial glory; is it not then incomparably profitable? And must not the right knowledge of it be so too? Yet some are entirely ignorant of it; others, who say they see, are widely mistaken about its nature, the time and manner of its communication, its subjects, the author and meritorious cause of it, and the way in which it is supported and cherished: and therefore, for the instruction of the ignorant, the rectification of wrong sentiments, and the confirmation of our minds in the truth, it may be expedient briefly to attempt the solution of the following inquiries:

I. Wherein spiritual life consists?

II. When it is communicated?

III. Whether it be instantaneously communicated, or gradually acquired by repeated acts?

IV. Who are the subjects of it? or, in what extent is it communicated?

V. In what sense is it communicated and supported through Christ?

VI. How faith derives supplies from him for its support and nourishment?

1. "Wherein does spiritual life consist?" This inquiry, though necessary both to inform your minds and to repel the charge of unintelligibleness, so frequently alledged against this doctrine, yet is exceeding difficult, both because of the mysteriousness of the thing in itself, and because of the blindness of the minds of those that are not endowed with it. It is mysterious in itself, as every kind of life is. The effects and many of the properties of animal life are plain, but what animal life is in itself is an inquiry too sublime for the most philosophic and soaring mind. Now spiritual life still approaches nearer to the life of the Divine Being, that boundless ocean of incomprehensible mysteries, and consequently exceeds our capacity more than any other. But besides, such is the blindness of unregenerate souls, that they cannot receive or know the things of the spirit of God, 1 Cor. ii. 14.; and therefore what is knowable by enlightened minds concerning spiritual life, cannot be apprehended with suitable clearness by them. The power of understanding it seems to be the effect of the thing understood, and cannot exist separately from it. So it is in other kinds of life. Nothing but reason can inform what is a rational life. Let the faculties of the most sagacious animal be ever so much polished, it can receive no ideas of it. So *he that believeth, hath the witness in himself,* 1 John v. 10. *and none but himself can hear its testimony**. But suppose we could form clear ideas, we should still be at a loss for clear expressions. I have a clear idea of many of the appetites, passions, and motions of animal life; but words may fail me to express them intelligibly to another, especially if he has no experience of them himself. It need not therefore afford you any surprize, if, after all that shall be said to illustrate this point, it still remains obscure. To design any more than to give you some faint glim-

* I do not mean that the unregenerate have the same degree of incapacity in the one case as beasts have in the other, but only that the one is as really incapable as the other. Reason in the unregenerate approaches nearer to spiritual life than the powers of animal life do to reason, and yet comes entirely short of it.

merings, some half-formed, inadequate conceptions of it, would be a piece of arrogant vanity.

Now spiritual life supposes a living spiritual principle, and it implies a disposition and a power to serve God, or of holy operation.

1. It supposes a living spiritual principle. There can be no life, no vital actions, without a vital principle, from whence they flow: *e. g.* there can be no animal life, no animal sensations and motions, without a principle of animal life. By a vital principle I mean that from which life and its actions and passions immediately proceed: *e. g.* in the formation of our souls a principle of reason is concreated with them, which is the source, the immediate cause of their life and rational operations. I call this a principle, because it is the beginning of life. Now spiritual life must suppose a principle of holiness. A principle of life of any kind will not suffice; it must be particularly and formally a holy principle; for life and all its operations will be of the same kind with the principle from which they proceed. Now a holy principle is something distinct from and superadded to the mere natural principle of reason. By virtue of this a man can think and will; but experience assures us, that thinking and willing, abstractedly considered, or under sundry modifications which they are capable of, are very different from thinking and willing in a holy manner, or with those peculiar modifications which spiritual operations bear. I can will an indifferent or evil object, if it appears to me as good; but my willing that which is morally good as such, is a very different act; and the principle from which the former act with its modification proceeds, may not be capable of producing the latter so modified. This may be illustrated by the case of the devils and their associates of the human race. They still retain the principle of reason, and are capable of thinking and willing; otherwise they would be incapable of torment, for without consciousness there could be no sense of misery, and consciousness implies thinking; and without willing there can be no desire of happiness, or abhorrence of penal evil; but yet they are utterly incapable of thinking and willing

in a manner morally good, and therefore a principle of holiness must be something distinct from a mere rational principle.

It may be urged, "That all the acts of spiritual life may be resolved into the acts of reason, namely, thinking and willing in a holy manner; and therefore the principle of the former is the same with that of the latter. In answer to this, I grant that the principle of reason, when it implies a power of putting forth such acts, and about such objects, as holiness includes; when it implies a power of knowing and choosing those things which the divine law requires us to know and choose, that then it is the same with a principle of spiritual life; and this is the case of such reasonable beings as still continue in their original uprightness: but the principle of reason may be so maimed as to lose this power, and yet not lose its nature; that is, it may become incapable of that manner of operation which spiritual life produces, and yet continue a principle of reason still. This is evident from the case of infernal spirits, formerly mentioned. Now the principle of spiritual life supplies this moral defect; it adds to reason a capacity of exercising itself suitably about spiritual things. Such a capacity is a separable adjunct of reason, and by the corruption of our natures it is actually separated from it; and consequently, till it be superadded to our rational powers, we are incapable of spiritual operation; I mean such a manner of spiritual operation as is morally good and acceptable to God. Our rational powers indeed can still exercise themselves about divine things, but then it is not in a fit manner: and therefore when a sinner is quickened by efficacious grace, a power of acting in a fit manner with respect to these things is superadded to his rational powers; and before this there is nothing in him out of which such a power may be educed.

To illustrate this matter, let us suppose a man deprived of the faculty of memory, and yet to continue rational (as he might in a low degree); according to this supposition, he will be always incapable of an act of memory, however strong his powers of perception,

volition, &c. may be, till the power of exercising his reason in that particular way which is called remembering, be conferred upon him. So let a sinner's mere natural powers be ever so much refined and polished, yet, if there be no principle of spiritual life distinct from them infused, he will be everlastingly incapable of living religion. This gracious principle is called *the seed of God*, 1 John iii. 9. to intimate, that as the seed of vegetables is the first principle of the plant, and of its vegetative life, so is this of spiritual life, and all its vital acts.

2. Spiritual life implies a disposition to holy operation; an inward propensity, a spontaneous inclination towards holiness; a *willing that which is good*, Rom. vii. 18. Every kind of life has some peculiar innate tendencies, sympathies, and antipathies: so animal life implies a natural inclination to food, to move at proper seasons, &c. There is a savour, a relish for divine things, as essential to spiritual life as our natural gusts and relishes are to natural life. Hence gracious desires are often signified in scripture under the metaphors of hungering and thirsting; and to this St. Peter expressly alludes; *as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.* 1 Pet. ii. 2. By virtue of this disposition, believers set their affections on things above, Col. iii. 2.; [φρονειτε τα ανω] they relish, they savour, they affect things above. This is the [το φρονημα τω πνευματος] the spiritual-mindedness, the savour of the spirit, which is spiritual life; and stands in opposition to the [φρονημα της σαρκος] the relish and propensions of mere nature. Rom. viii. 6. By virtue of this the strongest bent of their souls is God-ward; they tend, they gravitate towards him as their proper centre. Their *desire is unto him, and to the remembrance of his name.* Isa. xxvi. 8. *Their soul follows hard after him.* Psal. lxiii. 8. By virtue of this they incline to keep all God's commandments; they have an inward tendency to obedience; they love God's law; they *delight in it after the inner man*, Psal. cxix. 97. Rom. vii. 22. and their love and delight will habitually sway them to observe it: religion is their

element, their choice. It is not in them forced and unnatural, as all those operations are which do not proceed from an intrinsic principle; and that reluctancy and indisposedness which they sometimes unhappily feel in themselves to religious duties, is preternatural with respect to this spiritual disposition; as the loathing of healthful food is to the human body: it proceeds from a disorder, a weakness in their spiritual life, occasioned by the strugglings and transient prevalency of contrary principles: it is owing to the lustings of the flesh against the spirit. Again, Their obedience is not servile and mercenary, resulting merely from the apprehension of the misery which will ensue upon disobedience; but it is generous and filial, proceeding from a convictive view of the intrinsic reasonableness, congruity, and amiableness of the duties of holiness; from the pleasure and satisfaction which the performance of them, under this view, naturally produces; (so a man is excited to eat, not merely by his apprehension of the necessity of it for the support of his body, but also by the pleasure he finds in the very action) and from a sense of the divine authority enjoining those duties. By this the genuine acts of spiritual life are infallibly distinguished from that low and ignoble devotion which flows from custom, education, horrors of conscience, and all the principles of mere nature.

It is true, indeed, some persons by nature, and consequently without this supernatural disposition, may incline to and delight in sundry things that, as to the matter of them, are religious duties. So *(e. g.)* some are naturally averse to temperance; and sobriety is inwrought in their very constitutions. Yet still, this gracious disposition is distinguished from such a natural inclination by these two marks: The first implies a distinct reference to and a sense of the authority of the divine Lawgiver as enjoining those duties, and prompts a person to observe them formally as duties, as acts of obedience: but the latter prompts to the observance of them, considering them as things agreeable to the person's natural temper, without any distinct reference to God; and so they are rather acts of self-gratifica-

tion than of obedience to the divine authority; and the person would incline to them, if they were not commanded at all. They are duties materially, in themselves, but not formally, as performed by him: a regard to the authority of God, which is the constitutive form of obedience, is left out. A generous temper may incline to give alms; for the Lord's sake, is omitted. (2.) Spiritual life disposes to all duties of religion and acts of holiness universally. It delights in holiness as such, and regards the authority of the law for itself; and consequently, whatever has the nature of holiness, whatever has the sanction of divine authority, it cannot but affect and relish, even though it should be very contrary to a man's natural inclinations and temporal advantage. But a natural propension is always partial and limited, inclines to some duties only, neglecting others of equal or greater importance, which thwart the man's corrupt propensions. In a word, such a one's religion proceeds from the very same disposition that his sins proceed from, namely, a disposition to please himself. Hence it is always a maimed, imperfect, half-formed thing; it has not that amiable symmetry and uniformity, that congruous proportion and connection of parts, which are the ornament and distinguishing characteristic of that religion which flows from a heart, universally disposed to holiness.

3. Spiritual life implies a power of holy operation. A heavenly vigour, a divine activity animates the whole soul. It implies more than an inefficacious disposition, a dull, lazy velleity, productive of nothing but languid wishes. So every kind of life implies a power of operation suitable to its nature. Animal life *(e. g.)* has not only an innate propensity, but also a natural power to move, to receive, and digest food, &c. *They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength,* Isa. xl. 31.; that is, they have strength given them; renewed and increased by repeated acts, in the progress of sanctification. They are *strengthened with might, by the Spirit, in the inner man.* Eph. iii. 16. I do not mean that spiritual life is always sensible and equally vigorous; alas! it is subject to many languishments and indispositions; but I mean there is habitually in a

spiritual man a power, an ability for serving God, which, when all pre-requisites concur, and hinderances are removed, is capable of putting forth acts of holiness, and which does actually exert itself frequently. So animal life is subject to many disorders, which weaken its powers of operation, but yet still it retains those powers; and they are in some measure active, even under the greatest indisposition, at least in resisting the disorder, though perhaps with faint struggles. Again, I do not mean an independent power, which is so self-active as to need no quickening energy from the divine Spirit to bring it into act, but a power capable of acting under the animating influences of grace, which, as to their reality, are common to all believers, though they are communicated in different degrees to different persons. There is no need of the infusion of a new power, which the Spirit might actuate; but they have a power already, which needs nothing but the suitable concurrence of other causes to educe it into act. So the power of reason is not independent, so as to be capable of operation without the concurrence of divine providence, common to mankind, to quicken it into act; yet it is a power of reason still, because it is capable of rational acts, under common providential influence. But should we suppose a beast the object of that influence, it would still continue incapable of rational acts, till a rational power be implanted in it. The illustration itself directs us to the application of it.

Thus I have briefly shewn you wherein spiritual life consists; but I am afraid it may be still wrapt in obscurity from the eyes of some. And indeed it would require longer time, larger extent, and greater abilities to reflect sufficient light on so mysterious a point. Before we lose sight of this head, let us improve it to these purposes.

Let us improve it as a caution against this common mistake, *viz.* That our mere natural powers under the common aids of divine grace, polished and refined by the institutions of the gospel, are a sufficient principle of holiness, without the addition of any new principle. You see a principle of spiritual life is supernatural; it

is a divine, heaven-born thing; it is the seed of God; a plant planted by our heavenly Father. But, alas! how many content themselves with a self-begotten holiness! They have formed to themselves a system of natural self-sprung religion (I mean that it is natural originally and subjectively, though it be pretended to be divine objectively, because its patrons acknowledge objective revelation): in this they acquiesce as sufficient, as though they knew not that *that which is born of the flesh is flesh*. The cogitativeness of matter appears to me a notion very like this; for I think it might be demonstrated as clearly, that our mere natural powers, in our present lapsed state, without the infusion of any divine, supernatural principle, are incapable of living, evangelical holiness; as it can, that mere matter, without the super-addition of a principle intirely distinct from it, is capable of thinking, however much it be polished, or however differently it be modified.

Let us also improve what has been said, to remove another equally common and pernicious error, namely, That gospel-holiness consists merely in a series of acts materially good. Some imagine that all the actions they do, which are materially lawful and a part of religion, have just so much of holiness in them; and as they multiply such actions, their sanctification increases in their imagination. But, alas! do they not know, that a principle, a disposition, a power of holy acting must precede, and be the source of all holy acts! That a new heart must be given us, and a new spirit put within us, before we can *walk in God's statutes and keep his judgments, and do them!* Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. That we must be created in Jesus Christ unto good works, Eph. ii. 10. before we can walk in them! That *the love of God must be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost*, Rom. v. 5. before we can love Him! I do not say, that they that are void of spiritual life should not attempt to perform religious duties in the best manner they can, by virtue of their natural powers; for this is undoubtedly their duty, both because their sin is less when only the manner of their actions is sinful, than

when the matter and manner too are sinful; and because God, who has a right to appoint what methods He pleases, for the collation of his own favours, has constituted this as the way for them to obtain spiritual life. But I say, religious and moral duties, however frequently and perseveringly performed, are not evangelical holiness, when they are not done from a gracious supernatural principle; they are but spurious fruits growing from the wild root of depraved nature; and we had best not please ourselves with the view of them, as though they were the fruits of holiness, lest we be consumed at last as fruitless and noxious briars and thorns.

Further, Let us improve our account of spiritual life, to inform us of a very considerable difference betwixt a mere moral, and a spiritual life; or evangelical holiness and morality. Spiritual life is of a divine original; evangelical holiness flows from a supernatural principle; but mere morality is natural; it is but the refinement of our natural principles, under the aids of common grace, in the use of proper means; and, consequently, it is obtainable by unregenerate men. Hence the same act may be differently denominated, according to the principles from which it proceeds: that may be a piece of mere morality in one, who acts from natural principles only, which is an act of holiness in another, who acts from a principle of spiritual life. So an alms, when given from a gracious principle, and for Christ's sake, is a gracious act; but when given from a principle of natural generosity only, it deserves no higher name than that of mere morality. A mistake in this is a rock we may tremble to look at, and ought anxiously to avoid; for, alas! how many have been dashed to pieces upon it!

Again, We may improve what has been said, to convince us, that a life of formality, listlessness, and inactivity, is far from being a spiritual life. Where these things are habitual and predominant, they are infallible symptoms of spiritual death. It is true (as has been already observed) believers are subject to many sickly qualms and frequent indispositions; yea, at times, their languishments are such, that the operations of the vi-

tal principle within them are hardly discernible to themselves or others; and the vigour of their devotion, in their most sprightly hours, is checked and borne down by the body of death under which they groan. Yet still, there is an inextinguishable spark of life within, which scatters a glimmering light in the thickest darkness, and sometimes shines with illustrious brightness. The pulse of the spirit, though weak and irregular, still beats. There is an active power that reluctates and struggles against the counter-strivings of the flesh; that, under the greatest languor, puts forth some weak efforts, some faint essays, and, under the actuating influence of the divine Spirit, invigorates the soul to *mount up with wings like an eagle, to run without wearying, and walk without fainting.* And O! the joy, the pleasure of such heavenly activity! We therefore may write *Tekel* on the dull, inoperative religion of many; it serves for no end, but to prove them dead in trespasses and sins. The design of the whole dispensation of God's grace towards fallen sinners, is their vivification to holiness, *that they may bring forth fruit unto God,* Rom. vii. 4.: and sure, where that design is not obtained, there can be no true religion. Let us therefore beware lest we should have a name to live, while we are dead.

SERMON L.

The Divine Life in the Souls of Men considered.

GAL. ii. 20.

I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me: and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.

We proceed to inquire,

II. WHEN spiritual life is communicated? To this the scriptures direct us to answer, That it is communicated in that change which is generally called Regeneration, or Effectual Calling. This is more than intimated by the expressions used to signify the first communication of it. When spiritual life is infused, then it is that God is said to *beget us again to a lively hope*, 1 Pet. i. 3.; to *beget us of his own will*, James i. 18.; to *quicken us, who were dead in sin*, Eph. ii. 5.; to *give us a new heart, and put a new spirit within us; to take away the stony heart, and give an heart of flesh*, Ezek. xxxvi. 26.; and we are said to be *created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, Eph. ii. 10.; *born again*, John iii. 3.; *born or begotten of God*, John i. 13. 1 John iii. 9. Now it is evident, that these metaphorical expressions signify what is commonly called Regeneration, and that they express the first implantation of spiritual life. Several of them contain a direct allusion to the first communication of animal and human life, as generation or begetting, regeneration or being begotten again, creation, &c. And since these, taken literally, signify the first communication of natural life, they must, when used metaphorically and spiritually, signify the first communication of spiritual life. Life before generation, creation, &c. is an absurdity; and generation, creation, &c. without the communication of life suita-

ble to the nature of the being generated, created, &c. is also an absurdity. The other expressions, as *quickening us while dead in trespasses and sins, giving a new heart,* and the like, even literally signify this.

Hence, by way of improvement, we may be instructed to avoid a common mistake; namely, "That a power of living to God is universally conferred upon mankind in creation; and therefore that there is no need of a new supernatural principle to be infused, but only of the concurrence of common providence, and the institutes of the gospel, to polish and refine our natural principles. And some say, "That God in creation infuses spiritul life into all, on account of Christ's dying for them; and that if it be given without the merit of the recipient, it may as properly be ascribed to divine grace when it is a natural endowment bestowed in creation, as it would be if it were a supernatural gift communicated by an act distinct from and posterior to that of creation."

In order effectually to subvert this notion, consider, 1. If spiritual life were communicated in creation, there would be no propriety or significancy in the expressions used to denote the communication of it. There would be no need of a new, a second birth, if we were spiritually alive by virtue of our first birth. Were we holy by virtue of our first creation, what necessity of being *created in Christ Jesus,* or of being made *new creatures?* 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. vi. 15. There could be no opposition between the *old man and the new,* Rom. vi. 6. Eph. iv. 22, 24. Col. iii. 9, 10. The dispositions concreated with us cannot be called a new man.—2. The implantation of spiritual life is not only posterior to creation, but also to corrupt principles, which are innate. We are first *dead in sin before we are quickened,* Eph. ii. 5.; we have a *stony heart,* which must be taken away before a *heart of flesh* is given, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Such expressions undoubtedly signify an act posterior to, and consequently distinct from creation.—3. The implantation of a principle of spiritual life is eminently an act of special grace, which the concreation of our natural endowments is never said to be. *The washing of regeneration, and*

the renewing of the Holy Ghost, is an act of mercy, and the effect of *the kindness and love of God our Saviour*, Tit. iii. 5. *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved)*, Eph. ii. 4, 5. It is according to God's *abundant mercy, that we are begotten again unto a lively hope*, 1 Pet. i. 3. But what need I multiply instances? The entire tenor of the gospel directs us to ascribe the regeneration and sanctification of sinners to distinguishing and peculiar grace. But though our natural powers are the free communications of divine goodness, yet we are never said to be "created according to the grace and mercy of God." It is not agreeable to the sacred dialect to call the powers of reason, vision, &c. "the gifts of grace," in the same sense that spiritual life is so called: nay, I cannot find that our natural powers are ascribed to mercy, grace, free grace, at all; and it seems more congruous to ascribe them to other perfections of the Deity, as creative wisdom, power, and goodness. To this I may add, that spiritual life is always represented as communicated "through Christ as Mediator, and for his sake;" but our natural endowments are not said to be given through him. *The Holy Ghost is shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour*, Tit. iii. 5, 6. *We are sanctified through the offering up of the body of Christ once for all*, Heb. x. 10. *It is in Christ Jesus that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings*, Eph. i. 3. *He is made sanctification to us*, 1 Cor. i. 30. *and of his fulness we all receive*, John i. 16. But we are never said to be created for Christ's sake, or to be made rational creatures on the account of his righteousness. And, when we are said to be created by him, it signifies by him as an efficient, not as a meritorious cause.

From all which it appears, that spiritual life in a fallen creature is wholly supernatural: it is of a divine extract, and heaven-born in a peculiar sense. The sons of God *are born of God, and not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man.* If therefore any of us continue in our natural estate, we are dead

in sin, however strict formalists, or refined moralists we may be.—Let us inquire,

III. "Whether spiritual life be instantaneously communicated? Or, whether (as some alledge) it be gradually acquired by repeated acts?"

Here let it be observed, that we are not inquiring, how spiritual life is nourished and confirmed? for that is undoubtedly done gradually, by repeated acts, correspondent to the nature of spiritual life, and perfective of it in the progress of sanctification, as the power of reason is improved by a series of suitable exercises; but our inquiry is, How it is first obtained? Whether it be communicated in the instant of regeneration, as the power of understanding is in creation? And to this I answer affirmatively, for the following reasons.

1. "It is a contradiction that it should be originally acquired by acting, or a series of acts;" for that supposes that it exists, and does not exist, at the same time: as it acts, it exists; and as it is acquired by acting, it does not exist. It will perhaps be objected, "Thus it may be acquired by the repeated acts of another kind of life, namely, rational; or the exercises of our rational powers about spiritual objects." But this may be answered from what was observed under the first head, namely, That a principle of spiritual life is something distinct from and superadded to our natural powers. Now the acts of one kind of life, however often repeated, will never acquire a life of a quite different kind: *e. g.* The longest course, and the most frequent repetition of animal acts, will never acquire a principle of reason. Let a blind man hear ever so well, and ever so frequently, that will not acquire a visive faculty. So let our natural principles be exercised about spiritual objects with ever so much frequency and permanency, that will never acquire spiritual life. They are so depraved, that there remains nothing in them out of which it can be educed, without the communication of something supernatural. Be they ever so strong and active, they can contribute no more to our vivification, than the quick sensation of the auditory nerve can contribute to the acquisition of sight. Principles of action may be confirmed, and rendered

more prompt to act, by frequent exercise; but can never be originally obtained that way.

2. The terms whereby the communication of spiritual life is signified, as begetting, creating, quickening, or raising the dead, &c. denote an instantaneous communication.

3. Spiritual life is represented as prior to and the source and principle of all acts of evangelical holiness; and consequently it cannot be gradually acquired by such acts, but must be implanted previously to the putting forth of any such acts; as reason is not acquired by reasoning, but is a pre-requisite and principle of all the acts of reason. We are *created in Christ Jesus*, to make us capable of *good works*. Eph. ii. 10. We must have *a new heart and a new spirit, and the spirit of God be put within us, that we may walk in God's statutes, and keep his judgments, and do them*. Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. We must be *drawn of the Father*, must *hear and learn of him*, before we *can come to Christ*. John iv. 44, 45. God gives his people *one heart, and one way, that they may fear Him for ever. He puts his fear in their hearts*, before they cease *to depart from Him*. Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Now if all acts of holiness be the effects of a vital principle of holiness previously infused, then this principle is not acquired by a course of actions, and consequently it is not gradually acquired, but instantaneously infused; for that which is not acquired by acting is obtained by immediate communication from another, and therefore it does not take up time to obtain it, as a series of acts does. Again, There must be a first act of holiness; for if there be not a first, there cannot be a second, *&c.* Now since a principle of spiritual life is the spring, and the beginning of all acts of holiness, it must be, in order of nature, prior to the first act of holiness; and consequently it is not gradually acquired by such acts, but precedes them all, and therefore must be instantaneously infused.

Hence we may see the vanity of that religion which is gained in the same manner that a man learns a trade, or an uncultivated mind becomes knowing and learned, namely, by the repeated exercises of our natural

powers in the use of proper means, and under the aids of common providence. We have seen that a principle of spiritual life is not a good act, nor a series of good acts, nor any thing acquirable by them, but the spring and origin of all good acts. Let us then, my brethren, try whether our religion will stand this test.

Hence also we may learn a considerable difference between what is commonly called Morality, and Gospel-Holiness. The one is obtained, as other acquired habits are, by frequent and continued exercises; the other proceeds from a principle divinely implanted. Our

IV. Inquiry is, "Who are the subjects of spiritual life? or, In what extent is it communicated?

The answer to this is easy, from what has been already offered; for since it is communicated only in regeneration, then the regenerate only are the subjects of it; and since all men are not regenerate, then all men are not the subjects of it. Again, Since it is something distinct from and superadded to our rational powers, then it cannot be proved that all that are endowed with rationality are the subjects of it. Again, Since it is communicated by an act distinct from and posterior to creation, there is no reason to conclude that it is co-extended with creation, or with the bounds of humanity. And since all these things are so, we may safely conclude, negatively, That it is not communicated to mankind universally and positively; that it is communicated to all the regenerate, and to them only. Hence result two corollaries:

1. That there is no such thing as universal grace sufficient to qualify all men to serve God acceptably, without the supernatural communication of distinguishing grace; for *God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.* John iv. 24. Those acts which do not proceed from a principle of spiritual life, will no more be accounted by Him vital, spiritual acts, than the chattering of a parrot, or the seemingly rational pranks of an ape, will pass with a man of sense for human actions: and without a principle of spiritual life there can be no spiritual acts, as there can be no rational acts without

a principle of reason. And since, as has been shewn, spiritual life is not universally communicated, then there is no sufficient grace universally communicated; for the latter necessarily implies the former, and cannot be without it.

2. We may observe further, That the "best actions of the unregenerate are not properly and formally good, and acceptable to God." It is true their performing the duties of religion and virtue, in the best manner they are capable of, is less displeasing to God than the wilful neglect of them, or the commission of the contrary sins, and therefore they should endeavour to perform them; but yet it cannot be said to be positively pleasing to Him. It is not the act materially, or in itself, that is sinful, but formally, and as done by them, *e. g.* They do not sin as far as they pray, but as far as they pray in a sinful manner, without a gracious principle, without faith, and other requisites to acceptable prayer. *They ask, and receive not, because they ask amiss.* James iv. 3. *So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God* Rom. viii. 8. A tremendous thought to the unregenerate! Their whole life is an entire series of provocation; one continued act of rebellion against the great King of Heaven.

V. Our next inquiry is, "In what sense is spiritual life communicated and supported through Christ?"

To explain and illustrate this point, let these three things be considered:

1. That "by the sin of our first parents and representatives, our principle of spiritual life was forfeited, and the forfeiture is continued, and spiritual death brought on us, by our personal sin."

That Adam was constituted the representative of his posterity, and consequently that his sin is imputed to them, I shall take for granted, not having time to prove it. And if this be granted, then we are destitute of spiritual life; for, That disobedience may be punished, consistently with reason and justice, by the judicial privation of our power to obey, cannot be denied, if these reasonable *postulata* be conceded: That it is consistent with the justice and goodness of the Deity to suspend the continuance of the powers of

upright moral agency conferred upon his creatures, on the condition of their right improvement of them: That when such powers are abused and misimproved, they may justly be withdrawn: And that, when withdrawn in consequence of their being forfeited by a criminal misimprovement, God is not obliged in justice to restore them. Now these *postulata* imply no contradiction, and therefore may have been matters of fact; and they are implied in the scripture representation of the circumstance of Adam, and his posterity, as related to him; and therefore were matters of fact, and consequently Adam and his posterity, on the account of his sin, actually are, at least justly might be, deprived of spiritual life.

As to our personal sin, it contributes two ways to deprive us of spiritual life, morally and physically; morally, in the same sense that Adam's sin does, as it involves us in guilt, and so infers the judicial privation of the imperfect relics of our Maker's moral image; and physically, as every act, and especially a series of acts, naturally tends to strengthen and encourage the principle from whence they flow; to acquire that facility in acting which is called a habit; and to weaken and extirpate all contrary principles, and so indispose for the exertion of contrary acts.

Hence it follows, that in order to the restoration of spiritual life, the moral influence of sin must be removed by making a competent satisfaction to divine justice, to redeem the blessing forfeited; and its physical influence obstructed by purchasing and communicating divine influences, to weaken and extirpate the principles of sin, and that fatal promptitude and facility of acting which is contracted by the frequent exercise of them; and to infuse an opposite principle of holiness, and mature it into an habit. And this introduces the other two things intended; and therefore,

2. The Lord Jesus by his sufferings made a "complete satisfaction to divine justice," and thereby redeemed the blessing forfeited; and by the merit of his obedience, purchased divine influence for the extirpation of the principles of spiritual death which

lurk in our natures, and the implantation of holiness. Hence the regeneration and sanctification, as well as the salvation of his people, are ascribed to his merits and death. We are *sanctified through the offering up of the body of Christ.* Heb. x. 10. And *the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered up himself, without spot to God, purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.* Heb. ix. 14. *He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Titus ii. 14. Hence our *old man* is said to be *crucified with him,* Rom. vi. 6. and we to be *quickened together with him.* Col. ii. 13. Therefore it is only on the account of his righteousness that spiritual life is first given, and afterwards maintained and cherished. God acts, in the whole affair, as the God of grace, with a distinct reference to the mediation of Christ.

3. Christ, the Purchaser, is appointed also "the Communicator of spiritual life" to his people. *The Son quickeneth whom he will.* John v. 21. *He is exalted as a prince to give repentance to Israel,* Acts v. 31. *He is our life,* Col. iii. 3, 4. *and the Author and Finisher of our faith.* Heb. xii. 2. In a word, *all power in heaven and on earth is given to him,* Matt. xxix. 18.; a sovereign empire of grace, founded in his own blood, is devolved upon him, and *He is given to be head over all things to his church,* Eph. i. 22.; a head not only of government, but of quickening influence; for *from him all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.* Col. ii. 19. It is therefore by his own hands that all the blessings purchased by his blood are communicated.

Hence, for the particular improvement of this head, let believers be taught to look to the Lord Jesus, the great Treasurer of heaven, for the supplies of his grace to support and nourish their spiritual life. Poor things! You are weak in yourselves, but his *grace is sufficient for you, and his strength shall be made perfect in your weakness.* "Ye are complete in him," therefore "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; strong

in the Lord, and in the power of his might! Come up out of the wilderness, leaning upon your beloved. Be of good courage, and he will strengthen your heart." Do not indulge a dastardly temper, nor harbour diffident and desponding fears; for, "have you not known? Have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." If you "compass yourselves with sparks of your own kindling," your devotions will be cold and languid, and a deadly chilliness will benumb your spirit. Place yourselves therefore under the vivifying beams "of the sun of righteousness, and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall."

And let "the slain of the daughter of my people" apply to him for quickening grace. Behold sinners! your Physician; cry after him; plead for life. See the great treasury of vivifying influence; stand at the door knocking, begging and weeping, and never depart till you can say, "I return a living soul." Here is a fountain of life opened, and *let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* But I hasten to inquire,

VI. "How Faith derives supplies from Christ for the support and nourishment of spiritual life?"

I shall proceed to the solution of this by the following gradation.

1. The communication of grace from Christ to maintain and nourish spiritual life in his people, is a peculiar and distinguishing communication. It is appropriated to them, and not promiscuously dispensed to mankind in general. So animal spirits and nervous juices, are communicated from the head to that particular body to which it belongs, and to none other. So a vine conveys nutritive and prolific sap to its own branches, exclusive of all others. It may, indeed, be of service to other things in other respects, as for shade, the entertainment of the sight, &c. but in this respect it supplies its own branches only. Thus Christ sheds his extensive influence on the whole creation; for *by him all things consist;* but that particular kind and

degree of influence, whereby believers are quickened and kept alive, is peculiarly appropriated to them.

2. It is fit and necessary there should be a peculiar union betwixt Christ and his people, as the foundation of this peculiar influence.

Spiritual life, as to its infusion and preservation, proceeds from the Lord-Mediator, both morally and physically. Morally, from the merit of his obedience and sufferings, whereby it was purchased; and physically, from his operation, whereby it is effected. And in both these views, it is congruous and necessary that it should suppose a special union with him.

As it results morally from his merit, it is fit there should be a special legal union, as the foundation of it. Christ and his people must be actually "one in law," before they can be actually intitled to or receive and enjoy the blessings purchased by his obedience to the law. So a wife must be made legally one with her husband, by a conjugal union, in order to intitle her to and give her the possession of his estate. An insolvent debtor must be legally one with his surety, that the surety's discharge of the debt may procure his acquittance.

And as the spiritual life proceeds physically from his agency, it is necessary there should be a previous special union, as the reason of the termination of that agency upon the believer rather than upon another. This must be a real, though spiritual union, as the communication of vital influences flowing from it, is real though spiritual. Wherever there is a special communication of influence, there is always a special union, as the source and foundation of it. So the peculiar influence of the soul upon the body, of the head upon the members, supposes that they are peculiarly united.

Accordingly, the scriptures represent a peculiar union betwixt Christ and his people, which is not betwixt him and the rest of mankind, to whom he does not communicate spiritual life. *I am the vine*, says he to his disciples, *and ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.* John xv. 5. To the same purport elsewhere, *I in them,*

and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one. John xvii. 23. This is intimated, when the relation betwixt Christ and his people is represented by a conjugal union. They *are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that they should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.* Rom. vii. 4. *They are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.* Eph. v. 28, 30. But it is most plainly asserted in those passages where Jesus is represented as the head, the church collectively as his body, and particular believers as the members of his body. *As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ* mystical. *For by one Spirit we are all baptized,* or initiated *into one body. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.* 1 Cor. xii. 12—27. *God gave him to be head over all things to his church, which is his body.* Eph. i. 22, 23. See also Eph. iv. 15, 16. Col. ii. 19.

3. It is fit that *that* grace which has a peculiar concurrence or instrumentality in the uniting of the soul to Christ, and in continuing of that union, should also have a "peculiar concurrence or instrumentality in deriving supplies of spiritual strength from him;" for since union is the true special ground of the communication, it is fit that that which is the peculiar instrument or bond of this union, should also be the peculiar instrument of receiving, or vehicle of communicating vital influences. Now,

4. Faith has a "peculiar concurrence" or "instrumentality in the first union" of the soul to Christ, and the consequent continuation of the union. It is the grand ligament whereby they are indissolubly conjoined. It is true, the spiritual man, as well as our animal bodies, consists of several essential parts. Repentance, love, and the whole system of evangelical graces and moral virtues are as necessary, in their proper respective places, as faith: But then faith has a peculiar aptitude, above all other graces and virtues, for performing the part we now appropriate to it. So heart, lungs, bowels, &c. are essential to the human body, as well as nerves and arteries; but the nerves

are the peculiar vehicles to carry the vital spirits from the brain; and the arteries are the only conveyancers of the blood from the heart, through many labyrinths, to the whole body.

Faith, in a special manner, implies those things in its very nature, which reason directs us to look upon as suitable pre-requisites or concomitants of deriving vital influence from Christ. For instance, It is fit that all that receive spiritual life as a blessing of the covenant of grace, should submit to and acquiesce in the terms of that covenant. Now such a submission and acquiescence is faith. It is fit, all that derive strength from Christ should be brought to place a humble, self-diffident dependence upon him for it, conscious of their own weakness. Now faith principally consists in such a dependence, and therefore is so often called *a trusting in the Lord.*

Moreover, the sacred oracles assert the peculiar instrumentality of faith in this matter. *Christ* is said to *dwell in our hearts by faith*, Eph. iii. 17.; and it is by *believing in his name that we receive power to become the sons of God.* John i. 12. He himself tells us, *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, shall live by me.* John vi. 56, 57. And by eating his flesh and drinking his blood, is undoubtedly meant faith in him; and consequently it is by faith believers are nourished.

For the particular improvement of this head, I shall make these three remarks:

1. That a saving faith is always operative; and what renders it so is its constant dependence on Christ for quickening grace. It is designed by God, and has a peculiar aptitude in its own nature to derive strength for all acts of holiness from Christ; and he will not deny any of the influences it naturally craves! He is a living head, and will not suffer any of his members to languish under perpetual mortal decays, or drudge away their lives in successless toils, or supinely waste them in sloth and inactivity. He will fail none that trust in him; but their dependence on him will be like the leaning of the ivy on the oak, or

the radication of a tree in a fruitful soil, an assured method to obtain support and nourishment. So far is a dependence on him from leading to sloth and libertinism, as some slanderously surmise.

2. We infer, that *without faith, it is impossible to please God.* It has been shewn, that without union to Christ we cannot have an actual interest in his righteousness, or be the special objects of that quickening influence, whereby the spiritual life and activity of his people is maintained; and without these, our persons or performances cannot be accepted, unless our own righteousness be sufficient, without an actual interest in his, to procure the pardon of sin, and reinstate us in the divine favour; and unless human nature, labouring under the maladies of its present degeneracy, be capable, without the special aids of divine grace, to yield suitable obedience to the law: neither of which can be asserted, without virtually renouncing the whole gospel. And we have seen, that faith has so important a place in the unition of the soul with Christ, and consequently, in intitling us to his righteousness, and deriving vital influences from him, that without it we cannot be at all united to him, or share in the happy consequences of this union, no more than there can be a circulation of the blood without veins and arteries.

3. We observe that gospel-holiness may be distinguished from all counterfeits, and particularly from what some dignify with the name of morality, by this criterion, that it pre-supposes a special union with Christ, and is cherished in the heart, and exercised in practice, by virtue of the quickening influences flowing from him, as the head of his church, and received by faith; whereas mere morality does not necessarily suppose such an union, but may result from our natural powers, under the common influences of divine providence.

I shall conclude with a short general improvement of the whole subject, in the following references:

1. That the reason why religion is so burdensome to many is, because they are "destitute of a principle of spiritual life," and the "quickening communica-

tions of divine grace." Constrained by self-love, they drudge and toil in religious duties, and cry, "What a weariness is it!" Or impatient of so disagreeable a burden, they neglect them entirely. Religion is not natural to them, for want of a new nature. But *to you that believe, Christ is precious; all his ways are pleasantness, and all his paths are peace.* His *yoke is easy, and* his *burden light.*

2. Let us examine ourselves, whether the evidences of spiritual life, which may be collected from what has been said, give us reason to conclude that we are possessed of it. Let us cast the discourse into a form of interrogation, and propose the following inquiries to our consciences.

Do we feel, or have we felt a supernatural principle working within? Is our religion heaven-born? or is it natural and self-sprung? Is the habitual bent of our wills God-ward? Do our hearts propend towards Him, as their ultimate scope? Do we *delight in his law after the inner man, and will that which is good, even when we cannot do it?* Do we perceive ourselves at times *strengthened with might in the inner man?* And that we *can do all things through Christ strengthening us?* Have we ever experienced the important change of regeneration? are *old things passed away, and all things become new?* Have we *put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness?*

Is our religion more than a mere acquired habit, originally obtained by our own industry only, and the exercise of our natural powers, excited and assisted by education, custom, the means of grace? &c. Was it begun in the instantaneous infusion of a gracious principle, immediately by the Holy Spirit?

Do we derive our strength for obedience from Christ by faith? Is he *our life?* Are we generally crying, *Lord we have no strength; but our eyes are unto thee?* Can we say with the apostle, *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and what I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God?*

My dear brethren, let us search ourselves with these

and the like inquiries; for many are destructively deceived in this matter. Living religion is wrapt in darkness from the eyes of most: they either place it in that in which it does not consist at all, or take the circumstances and appendages for the substance of it. *Great is the mystery of godliness*, not only objectively, as revealed in the scriptures, but also subjectively, as wrought in the heart of a believer. It ought therefore to engage our most serious and intense thoughts.

3. Let those who are made spiritually alive, "acknowledge and admire the distinguishing grace of God, and act as it becomes their character."

You have seen that spiritual life is not promiscuously dispensed to mankind in general, but only to the regenerate, who are comparatively few. And can you restrain your wonder, that you should be the chosen objects of sovereign grace? or avoid breaking forth into extatic praises at so surprizing a dispensation?

Moreover, the design of your vivification, and the natural tendency of the principle of spiritual life is, that you may live to God; and therefore, you are peculiarly obliged to make your whole life a series of obedience to Him. Indulge the propensions and tendencies of the new nature: obey and cherish all the impulses and motions of the divine principle within you. To offer violence to the new man, to cramp and fetter its powers, to resist its motions, and suffocate its heavenly aspirations, is the most horrid crime. It is to attempt to murder the child of grace in embryo; and sure, this is the worst of murder. *Reckon ye yourselves, then, to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof; neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead; and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* And *if ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections upon* (savour and relish) *things above, not things on earth.*

And when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

4. I request and importune those that are dead in sin, to "use all proper means for the obtaining of quickening grace." The exhortation implies no contradiction or impossibility; for though they are spiritually dead, yet their natural principle of reason is still alive, and capable of exercising itself about spiritual objects; and God has enjoined them to make the best use they can of it, as the only way to obtain a better principle. God deals with us according to our nature and circumstances. We are corrupted creatures, and therefore He exerts his exceeding great and mighty power to work principles of holiness in us; but still we are rational creatures, and therefore He uses the powers of moral suasion with us, and justly requires us to exert our rational faculties in all the institutions of the gospel.

Be persuaded then, sinner, no longer to lie still in security; but *arise, call upon thy God; if so be that God will think upon thee, that thou perish not. Lazarus! come forth. Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light.* Linger not, lest eternal death overtake thee. Methinks I see him just at thy heels, for *thy damnation now of a long time slumbereth not.* Arise, come forth at the call of the gospel; otherwise how wilt thou stand the shocking terror of that final alarm, *Awake ye dead, and come to judgment?* But I must conclude with my hearty wish, *That the hour may come*, and O! that this may be the hour, *in which the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.*—Which gracious prediction may the God of grace accomplish upon us all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SERMON LI.

The Ways of Sin hard and difficult.

Acts iv. 6.

It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

YOU often hear of the narrow and rugged road of religion, which leadeth unto life; and some of you, I am afraid, have not courage enough to venture upon it. You rather choose the smooth broad downhill road of vice and pleasure, though it leads down to the chambers of death. It must be owned, that a religious life is a course of difficulties, a hard struggle, a constant conflict; and it is fit you should be honestly informed of it; but then it is fit you should also know, that the difficulties arise not from the nature of religion, but from the corruption and depravity of the nature of man in its present degenerate state. A course of religion is disagreeable, is hard, is difficult to mankind; just as a course of action is difficult to the sick, though it is easy, and affords pleasure to those that are well. There are difficulties in the way of sin as well as in that of holiness, though the depravity of mankind renders them insensible of it. This is the view of the case I would now lay before you. There is a sense, in which it is true, that it is a hard thing to be a sinner, as well as to be a saint: there are huge difficulties in the way to hell, as well as in the way to heaven. And if you are insensible of them, it is owing, as I just observed, to the corruption of your nature, and not to the real easiness of the thing in itself. It may be easy and pleasing to you to sin, just as it is easy to a dead body to rot, or pleasing to a leper to rub his sores. But to a reasonable creature, in a state of purity, with all his powers uncorrupted, it would indeed be an unpleasing, a hard, a difficult thing to take that course which is so easy and so delightful to

you; as it is hard and painful for a living man to suffer the mortification of his limbs, or for a healthy man to make himself sore. If it be hard, in one sense, to live a life of holiness, it is certainly hard, in another sense, to live a life of sin; namely, to run against conscience, against reason, against honour, against interest, against all the strong and endearing obligations you are under to God, to mankind, and to yourselves; or, in the words of my text, *it is hard for you to kick against the pricks.*

This is a proverb in use among various nations, which has received a sanction from heaven in this text: It is used by Pindar*, Euripides†, and Æschylus‡, among the Greeks; and by Terence§, among the Latins: and from the sense in which they use it, we are helped to understand it. *To kick against the pricks,* is an allusion to a lazy or unruly plough-horse or ox, that when pricked with a goad (an instrument used in ploughing in sundry places, instead of a whip) refuses to go on, and spurns and kicks against the goad, and so wounds himself, and not the driver. In such circumstances, it is much harder to kick against the goads, and resist, than to go on: if he goes on, he need not fear the goad; but his resistance only hurts himself. It is to this that the phrase alludes; and it signifies a resistance injurious to the person that makes it, when it would be both easy and advantageous to obey.

Hence we may learn the precise sense in which it is used by the mouth of Christ, in this pungent address to Saul the persecutor, whom we now know under the higher name of Paul the apostle.

* ——— ϖοτὶ κέν̃ρον δὲ τοι
λακτιζόμεν τελεύει
Ὀλιθηρὸς οἶμος ——— i. e. contra stimulum calcitrare, lubrica est via.

† Θυοιμ' ἄν αὐτῶ μᾶλλον ἢ θυμᾶμενος
Πρὸς κέν̃ρα λακτεζοίμι θνητὸς ὢν τῳ Θεῳ.
i. e. I will rather offer sacrifice to him, than, being a mortal, be angry with God, and kick against the pricks.

‡ Πρὸς κέν̃ρα μὴ λακτίζε. κ. τ. λ.

§ ——— Inscitia est,
Adversum stimulum calces. ———

Saul, animated with a furious misguided, though honest zeal, against the disciples of Jesus, was now on his way to Damascus in pursuit of them; and had a commission from the highest court of the Jews to apprehend them: a commission which he was impatient to execute. This, in human view, was a very unpromising hour for his conversion; now it appears more likely that vengeance will arrest him as a criminal, than that grace will prevent him as a vessel of mercy. But O! what agreeable exploits of grace has Jesus performed! At the first introduction of his religion, it was fit he should single out some great sinner, and make him a monument of his mercy, for the encouragement of future ages. Therefore he surprizes this fierce persecutor in his daring career, darts the splendors of his glory around him, and pierces him to the heart with this irresistible expostulation, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Saul, in a trembling consternation, replies, *Who art thou, Lord?* He thought he was only bringing to justice a parcel of contemptible blasphemous sectaries, unworthy of toleration; and little did he think that his persecuting zeal reached so high: little did he expect to hear one crying from the throne of heaven, *Why persecutest thou me?* But Jesus feels and resents the injuries done to his people, as done to himself. The head sympathizes with its members; therefore he answers, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* And then follows my text, *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. q. d.* "Since it is Jesus, whom thou persecutest, the injury done to me will only rebound upon thyself: I am infinitely advanced beyond the reach of thy rage; and even my people, who now seem in thy power, can suffer no real or lasting injury from it in the issue; for under my management, all things shall work for their good, but thy persecuting fury shall prove ruinous to thyself; as the wild ox that spurns and kicks against the goad hurts himself, and not the driver." Thus, as I told you, this proverb signifies a resistance injurious to the person resisting, and harmless to him against whom it is made. And is not this hard? Is it not an arduous preposterous exploit to break through the strong

restraints of the innate principle of self-preservation, and ruin one's self by a blow intended against another, beyond the reach of injury? This, one would think, is a piece of folly and cruelty, of which a being that has the least remains of reason or self-love, would be incapable.

This proverb may signify more: *q. d. I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest;* Jesus, the Lord of glory; Jesus, the Saviour of sinners; Jesus, who has died for such sinners as thee; Jesus, who is all love and mercy, excellency, and glory; Jesus, who has given thee such sufficient evidence of his divine mission, and the truth of his religion; and canst thou persecute Jesus? O! is this an easy thing to one that has the least reason or gratitude? Art thou able to break through such strong and endearing obligations? Is it not hard for thee to spurn against one so great, so glorious, so gracious, and condescending? Must not this be a horrid exploit of wickedness beyond thy power?

That I may the more fully illustrate the striking thought suggested by my text, I shall point out to you some seemingly insuperable obstacles in the way to hell, or some dire exploits, which, one would think, would be too hard for you to perform, which yet you must perform, if you persist in a course of sin.

1. Is it not a hard thing to be an unbeliever or a Deist in our age and country, while the light of the gospel shines around us with full blaze of evidence!

Before a man can work up himself to the disbelief of a religion attended with such undeniable evidence, and inspiring such divine dispositions and exalted hopes, what absurdities must he embrace! what strong convictions must he resist! what dark suspicions, what boding fears and misgivings, what shocking peradventures and tremendous doubts must he struggle with! what glorious hopes must he resign! what gloomy and shocking prospects must he reconcile himself to! what violence must be offered to conscience! what care must be used to shut up all the avenues of serious thought, and harden the heart against the terrors of death, and the supreme tribunal! How painful a piece of preposterous self-denial to reject the balm the gospel provides to heal a broken heart and a bleeding con-

science, and the various helps and advantages it furnishes us with to obtain divine favour and everlasting happiness! How hard to work up the mind to believe that Jesus, who spoke and acted, and suffered, and did every thing, like an incarnate God, was an impostor, or at best a moral philosopher! or that the religion of the Bible, that contains the most sublime and God-like truths, and the most pure and perfect precepts of piety and morality, is the contrivance of artful and wicked men, or evil spirits! These, brethren, are no easy things. There are many sceptics and smatterers in infidelity, but few, very few, are able to make thorough work of it, or commence staunch unbelievers. The attempt itself is a desperate shift. A man must have reduced himself to a very sad case indeed, before he can have any temptation to set about it. He has, by his wilful wickedness, set Christianity against him, before he can have any temptation to set himself against Christianity: and when he proclaims war against it, he finds it hard, yea, impossible to make good his cause. He may indeed put on the airs of defiance and triumph, and affect to laugh at his enemy, and at times may be half-persuaded he has really got the victory. But such men find the arms of their own reason often against them, and their own conscience forms violent insurrections in favour of religion, which they cannot entirely suppress; so that they are like their father, whatever they pretend, they believe and tremble too. Alas! that there should be so many unhappy companions in this infernal cause, in our country and nation. They find it hard even now, to kick against the goads: and O! how much harder will they find it in the issue! Their resistance will prove ruinous to themselves: but neither they nor the gates of hell shall prevail against the cause they oppose. Christianity will live when they are dead and damned, according to its sentence. It is a long-tried bulwark, that has withstood all the assaults of earth and hell for near 6000 years, and has still proved impregnable. Infidels may hurt themselves by opposing it; as an unruly, stupid ox, their proper emblem, may hurt himself, but not the goads, by kicking against them.

2. Is it not hard for men to profess themselves believers, and assent to the truths of christianity, and yet live as if they were infidels!

A professed speculative atheist or infidel is a monster that we do not often meet with: but the more absurd and unaccountable phenomenon of a practical atheist; one who is orthodox in principle, but an infidel in practice, we may find wherever we turn: and it would be strange if none such have mingled in this assembly to-day. To such I would particularly address myself.

If you believe Christianity, or even the religion of Nature, you believe that there is a God of infinite excellency; the Maker, Preserver, Benefactor, and Ruler of the world, and of you in particular; and consequently, that you are under the strongest and most endearing obligations to love him, and make it your great study and endeavour to obey his will in all instances. Now is it not strange, that while you believe this, you are able to live as you do! How can you live so thoughtless of this great and glorious God, who bears such august and endearing relations to you? How can you withhold your love from him, and ungratefully refuse obedience? Is not this a hard thing to you? Does it not cost you some labour to reconcile your consciences to it? If this be easy to you, what champions in wickedness are you! how mighty to do evil! This would not be easy to the mightiest archangel: no, it is a dire atchievment he would tremble to think of. And if it be easy to you, it is, as I observed before, in the same sense that it is easy to a dead body to rot. Your strength to do evil is your real weakness, or, which is the same, the strength of your disease.

Again, If you believe the christian religion, you believe the glorious doctrine of redemption through Jesus Christ; you believe that he, the Father's great co-equal Son, assumed our nature, passed through the various hardships of life, and died upon a cross for you; and all this out of pure unmerited love. And is it no difficulty to neglect him, to dishonour him, to slight his love, and disobey his commands?

Does this monstrous wickedness never put you to a stand? Degenerate and corrupt as you are, have you not such remains of generous principles within you, as that you cannot, without great violence to your own hearts, reject such a Saviour? Does not at least a spark of gratitude sometimes kindle in your hearts, which you find it hard to quench entirely? Does not conscience often take up arms in the cause of its Lord, and do you not find it hard to quell the insurrection? Alas! if you find little or no difficulty in treating the blessed Jesus with neglect, it shews that you are mighty giants in iniquity, and sin with the strength of a devil.

Again; If you believe the christian religion, you must believe that regeneration, or a thorough change of heart and life, and universal holiness, are essentially necessary to constitute you a real christian, and prepare you for everlasting happiness. And while you have this conviction, is it not a hard thing for you to be only christians in name, or self-condemned hypocrites, or to rest contented in any attainments short of real religion? Is it an easy thing to you to keep your eyes always shut against the light, which would shew you to yourselves in your true colours? to keep such a close guard, as never to let the mortifying secret pass, that you are indeed but a hypocrite, and to harden yourselves against the portion of hypocrites, which will ere long be distributed to you?

Finally, If you believe christianity, or even natural religion, you believe a future state of rewards and punishments; rewards and punishments the highest that human nature is capable of. And is it not a hard thing to make light of immortal happiness, or everlasting misery? Since you love yourselves, and have a strong innate desire of pleasure and horror of pain, how can you reconcile yourselves to the thoughts of giving up your portion in heaven, and being ingulphed for ever in the infernal pit? Or how can you support your hope of enjoying the one, and escaping the other, while you have no sufficient evidence? Can you venture so important an interest upon

an uncertainty, or dare to take your chance, without caring what might be the issue? Are you capable of such dreadful fool-hardiness? Do you not often shrink back aghast from the prospect? Does not the happiness of heaven sometimes so strongly attract you, that you find it hard to resist? And do not the terrors of hell start up before you in the way of sin, and are you not brought to a stand, and ready to turn back? The pit of hell, like a raging volcano, thunders at a distance, that you may not fall thereinto by surprize. You may perceive its flames, and smoke, and roarings in the threatenings of God's law, while you are yet at a distance from it. And is it easy for you to push on your way, when thus warned? O! one would think, it would be much more easy and delightful to a creature endowed with reason and self-love, to abandon this dangerous road, and choose the safe and pleasant way of life.

I might multiply instances under this head: but these must suffice at present. And I proceed to ask,

3. Is it not hard for a man to live in a constant conflict with himself? I mean with his conscience.

This obstacle in the way to hell has appeared in all the former particulars: but it is so great, and seemingly insuperable, that it deserves to be pointed out by itself. When the sinner would continue his career to hell, conscience, like the cherubim at the gates of Paradise, or the angel in Balaam's road, meets him with its flaming sword, and turns every way, to guard the dreadful entrance into the chambers of death. When a man goes on in the thoughtless neglect of God, and the concerns of eternity, or indulges himself in vice and irreligion, conscience whispers, "What will be the end of this course? thou shalt yet suffer for this. Is it fit thou shouldst thus treat the blessed God, and the Saviour Jesus Christ? Is it wise to neglect the great work of salvation, and run the risque of eternal ruin?" I may appeal to sinners themselves, whether they do not often hear such remonstrances as these from within? Indeed, in the hurry and bustle of business and company, and the headlong career of pleasure and amusement, the voice of conscience is

not heard. But you cannot always avoid retirement: sometimes you must be by yourselves, and then you find it hard to close up and guard all the avenues of serious thought. Then Conscience insists upon a fair hearing, and enters many a solemn protestation against your conduct, warns you of the consequence, and urges you to take another course. Whatever airs of impious bravery you put on in public, and however boldly you bid defiance to these things, yet, in such pensive hours, do you not find that you are cowards at heart? Is not conscience like to get the victory? Are you not obliged to break out into the world, and rally all its forces to your assistance, that you may suppress your conscience? Now, how hard a life is this! The life of the sinner is a warfare, as well as that of the christian. Conscience is his enemy, always disturbing him; that is, he himself is an enemy to himself while he continues an enemy to God. Some indeed, by repeated violences, stun their conscience, and it seems to lie still, like a conquered enemy. But this is a conquest fatal to the conquerors. O! would it not be much easier to let conscience have fair play, to pursue your own happiness, as it urges you, and leave the smooth, down-hill road to ruin, from which it would restrain you? Conscience urges you to your duty and interest with many sharp goads, and will you still kick against them? O! do you not find this hard? I am sure it would be very hard, it would be impossible to a creature under the right conduct of reason and self-love. And before you can be capable of performing this dire exploit with ease, you must have acquired a prodigious gigantic strength in sinning. This is what the mightiest saint upon earth could not dare to do. No; he owns conscience is his master: long did he resist, but now he must submit; and he would not incur the displeasure of his conscience for all the world. O! that we were all weak in this respect! My time will allow me only to add,

4. Is it not a hard piece of self-denial for you to deprive yourselves of the exalted pleasures of religion?

You love yourselves, and you love happiness, and therefore one would reasonably expect you would

choose that which will afford you the most solid, refined, and lasting happiness, and abandon whatever is inconsistent with it. Now religion is a source of happiness. Yes; that dull melancholy thing religion, which you think perhaps would put an end to all your pleasures, and which for that reason you have kept at a distance from; religion, which its enemies will tell you have made some intolerably precise, and dead to all the joys of life, and turned others mad and melancholy; religion, I say, will afford you a happiness more pure, more noble, and more durable than all the world can give. Religion not only proposes future happiness, beyond the comprehension of thought, but will afford you present happiness beyond whatever you have known while strangers to it. The pleasures of a peaceful approving conscience, of communion with God, the supreme good, of the most noble dispositions and most delightful contemplations; these are the pleasures of religion. And ask those who have enjoyed them, those whom experience has qualified to be judges, and they will tell you with one voice, "There are no pleasures comparable to these." Besides, religion has infinitely the advantage of other things as to futurity. Those pleasures which are inconsistent with it end in shocking prospects, as well as pale reviews. But religion opens the brightest prospects; prospects of everlasting salvation and happiness; prospects that brighten the gloomy shades of death, and the awful world beyond, and run out infinitely beyond our ken through a vast eternal duration. My heart is so full of my subject, that I must borrow the more expressive words of another, to give it vent *.

"Let the proud Witling argue all he can,
"It is Religion still that makes the man:
"'Tis this, my friends, that streaks our morning bright:
"'Tis this that gilds the horrors of our night.

"When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few;
"When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue;

* See a Letter to Mr. Hervey by a physician, prefixed to his Meditations. Vol. I.

" 'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart;
" Disarms affliction, or repels its dart;
" Within the breast bids purest pleasures rise;
" Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies.

" When the storm thickens, and the thunder rolls;
" When the earth trembles to th' affrighted poles;
" The pious mind nor doubts nor fears assail,
" For storms are zephyrs, or a gentler gale.

" And when disease obstructs the labouring breath,
" When the heart sickens, and each pulse is death,
" Even then Religion shall sustain the just,
" Grace their last moments, nor desert their dust."

Such, my brethren, is religion; the highest, the most substantial, and most lasting happiness of man. And is it not a painful piece of self-denial to you, to give up all this happiness, when nothing is required to purchase it but only your choice of it! Is not this doing violence to the innate principle of self-love and desire of happiness? Can you be so stupid, as to imagine that the world, or sin, or any thing that can come in competition with religion, can be of equal or comparable advantage to you? Sure your own reason must give in its verdict in favour of religion. And is it not a hard thing for you to act against your own reason, against your own interest, your highest, your immortal interest, and against your own innate desire of happiness? Do you never find it any difficulty to live for years in the world, without once tasting the sweets of the love of God, or the pleasures of an applauding conscience? Is it not hard, that while others around you, in the use of the very means which you enjoy, are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and are animated to endure the calamities of life, and encounter the terrors of death, by the prospect of everlasting glory, while they are now often lost in extatic wonder, while surveying the things that God hath laid up for them that love him; I say, is it not hard, that you should be destitute of all these transporting prospects, and have nothing but a fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation, or at best a vain self-flattering hope, which will issue in the more confounding disappointment? Is not this

really hard? Must it not be a difficulty to you to live at this rate?

And now, sinners, will you with infernal bravery break through all these obstacles, and force a passage into the flames below? Or will you not give over the preposterous struggle to ruin yourselves, and suffer yourselves to be saved? O let me arrest you in your dangerous career, as the voice which pronounced my text did St. Paul; and let me prevail upon you for the future to choose the highway to life, and take that course to which God, conscience, duty, and interest urge you. In that indeed you will meet with difficulties; it is a narrow and rugged road; and it will require hard striving to make a progress in it. But then the difficulties you have here to surmount are in the road to happiness, with which therefore it is worth your while to struggle: but those in the other are in the road to destruction; and your striving to surmount them, is but striving to destroy yourselves for ever. It may be worth your while to labour and conflict hard to be saved, but is it worth while to take so much pains, and strive so hard to be damned? Besides, the difficulties in the heavenly road result from the weak, disordered, and wicked state of human nature, as the difficulty of animal action and enjoyment proceeds from sickness of body; and consequently, every endeavour to surmount these difficulties tends to heal, to rectify, to strengthen, and ennoble our nature, and advance it to perfection. But the difficulties in the way to hell proceed from the contrariety of that course to the best principles of human nature, and to the most strong and rational obligations, and consequently, the more we struggle with these difficulties, the more we labour to suppress and root out the remains of all good principles, and break the most inviolable obligations to God and ourselves. The easier it is for us to sin, the more base and corrupt we are: just as the more rotten a limb is, the easier for it to drop off; the more disordered and stupified the body is, the more easy to die. To meet with no obstacle in the way to hell, but to run on without restraint, is terrible indeed; it shews a man

abandoned of God, and ripe for destruction. Such an ease in sinning is the quality of a devil.

Upon the whole, you see, that though there be difficulties on both sides, yet the way to heaven has infinitely the advantage; and therefore, let me again urge you to choose it. You have walked long enough at variance with God, with your own conscience, with your own interest, and duty: come now, be reconciled: make these your antagonists no longer. While you persist in this opposition, you do but kick against the pricks? that is, you make a resistance injurious to yourselves. For the future, declare war against sin, Satan, and all their confederates, and ere long ye shall be made more than conquerors; and for your encouragement remember, *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son, saith the Lord God Almighty.*

SERMON LII.

The Characters of the Whole and Sick, in a spiritual Sense, considered and contrasted.

MATT. ix. 12.

But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

THERE is no article of faith more certain than that Jesus Christ is an all-sufficient and most willing Saviour, *able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him*, and that *those that come unto him, he will in nowise cast out.* They that intrust their souls in his hands he keeps, and none of them is lost. It is also certain that all the guilty sons of Adam stand in the most absolute need of him: in vain do they look for salvation in any other. Without him, they are undone for ever: and without him, their very existence becomes a curse, and their immortality but the duration of their misery. The disease of sin has so deeply infected their souls, that none but this divine Physician can heal them.

Since this is the case, who would not expect that Jesus would be universally the darling of mankind? Who would not expect that as many as are wounded, and just perishing of their wounds, would all earnestly apply to this Physician, and seek relief from him upon any terms? Who would suspect there should be so much as one heart cold and disaffected towards him? Must not all love and desire him, since all need him so extremely, and since he is so completely qualified to be their Deliverer?

But alas! notwithstanding such favourable presumptions from the nature of the thing, it is a most noto-

rious fact that this divine Physician is but little regarded in our dying world. This all-sufficient and willing Saviour is generally neglected by perishing sinners. There are thousands among us that have no affectionate thoughts of him, no eager longings after him, they exert no vigorous endeavours to obtain an interest in him, nor are they tenderly solicitous about it. They indeed profess his religion, and call themselves christians after his name: they pay him the compliment of a bended knee, and now and then perform the external duties of religion, and thus have high hopes they shall be saved through him; but as to their hearts and affections, he has no share there: these are reserved for the world, which in practical estimation they prefer to him, whatever they profess.

Now whence is this strange and shocking phenomenon in the rational world? Whence is it that the dying are careless about a Physician? that a Deliverer is neglected by those that are perishing? The true reason we may find in my text, *They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;* that is, "they who imagine themselves well, however disordered they are in reality, do not feel their need of a physician, and therefore will not apply to him; but they who feel themselves sick, will eagerly apply to him, and put themselves under his care."

This is the answer of Christ to the proud cavilling Pharisees, who censured his free conversation with publicans and sinners, at an entertainment which Matthew had prepared for him. The publicans were a sort of custom-house officers among the Jews, appointed by the Romans, whose tributaries they then were, to collect the levies or duties imposed by the government. They were generally persons of bad morals, and particularly given to rapine and extortion in raising the taxes. On this account they were particularly hated by the Jews, especially by the strict sect of the Pharisees. Their very office would have rendered them odious, even though they had behaved well in it; for it was a public badge of the slavery of the Jews to the Romans; which, to a people so proud and so fond of liberty as the Jews, was a mortification they

could not patiently bear. The publicans therefore were objects of general contempt and abhorrence, as an abandoned sort of men; and the Jews, particularly the rigid and haughty Pharisees, held no conversation with them, but kept them at a distance, as though they had been excommunicated. Hence, says Christ, concerning one excommunicated by the church for incorrigible wickedness, *Let him be to thee as an heathen man, and a publican*, Matt. xviii. 17.; that is, have no intercourse with him, but treat him as the Jews do the publicans.

The condescending Jesus, who *came to seek and save that which was lost*, did not conduct himself towards those poor outcasts, upon the rigid principles of the Pharisees. They held them in such contempt, that they did not labour to instruct and reform them. But Jesus preached to them, conversed with them freely, used the most condescending, affable, and ingratiating measures to reform them, and called some of them to the honour of being his disciples: of this number was Matthew, the author of this history; once an abandoned publican, afterwards a disciple, an apostle, and one of the four evangelists, whose immortal writings have diffused the vital favour of the name of Jesus through all ages and countries. O! the condescension, the freeness, the efficacy of the grace of Christ! it can make a publican an apostle! an abhorred outcast the favourite of heaven, and the companion of angels! What abundant encouragement does this give to the most abandoned sinner among you, to turn unto the Lord! Let publicans and sinners despair of mercy and salvation if they continue in their present condition; but if they arise and follow Jesus at his call, and become his humble teachable disciples, they need not despair; nay, they may rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and be assured they shall be admitted into the kingdom of God, when the self-righteous children of the kingdom are shut out.

When Matthew had embraced the call, he made a feast for his new Master, that he might shew his respect and gratitude to him, and that he might let his brother publicans and old companions have an oppor-

tunity of conversing with him, and receive his instructions. How natural is it for a sinner just brought to love Jesus, to use means to allure others to him, especially his former companions! Having seen his own guilt and danger, he is deeply affected with theirs, and would willingly lead them to that Saviour who has given him so gracious a reception. Indeed his generous endeavours of this kind, though the most substantial and disinterested evidences of friendship, often excite the contempt and ridicule of his former companions; and the more so, as they are generally attended with the imprudent, but well-meant blunders of inexperience, and an honest zeal mingled with wild-fire. But at times such a convert is made the instrument of bringing those to be his companions in the way to heaven, who had walked with him in the ways of sin: and this is sufficient encouragement to such of you as have been called, like Matthew, to use your best endeavours with your fellow-sinners. Who knows but you may *save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins?* And what a noble beneficent exploit is this!

The blessed Jesus, who was always ready to embrace every opportunity of doing good, whatever popular odium it might expose him to, cheerfully complies with Matthew's invitation, and mingles with a crowd of publicans at his table. Like a physician, he employs himself in an hospital, among the sick and dying, and not among the healthy and gay. The conversation of sinners could not be agreeable to him for itself; but as it gave him opportunity of doing them good, it afforded him a generous pleasure. To converse with his Father and the holy angels in his native heaven, would have been more pleasing in itself to his holy soul; but if by conversing with sinners in our guilty world, he can but save the perishing creatures, he cheerfully submits to the self-denial, and even rejoices in it: just as a compassionate physician, though he has no pleasures in the melancholy mansions of sickness, yet frequents them, that he may relieve the distressed.

The Pharisees now thought they had a good handle

to raise popular clamour against Christ, and therefore cavil at these freedoms, as though they had been profane, and inconsistent with the character of the Messiah, or even of a prophet. If he claimed this character, they thought it much more becoming him to keep company with them, than with profligate publicans. Hence, to stumble and perplex his disciples, they come to them, and ask, *Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?* The disciples were not as yet endowed with that mouth and wisdom which all their enemies could not withstand; and therefore Jesus answers them, and takes upon himself his own defence. *The whole*, says he, *have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.* Some suppose, that by the whole, Christ means those that were really whole, or that were not so infected with the disease of sin, as to stand in need of him as a physician. When such persons can be found among the sons of men, this exposition will appear more plausible. But since we know that all have sinned, and stand in need of Christ as a Saviour, it is much more reasonable, I think, to suppose, that by the whole, Christ means those that imagined themselves whole, though really languishing with the deadly disease of sin. It seems to me that he here answers the Pharisees upon their own principles, and proves his conduct to be justifiable, even supposing their high opinion of themselves, and their contemptuous idea of the publicans, to be true; as if he had said, "I come into the world under the character of a physician for sick souls. Such, you will grant, these despised publicans are; and therefore, you must also grant, that these are the persons I have to deal with, and these are most likely to make application to me. But as for yourselves, you think you are righteous; you think you are not so far gone with the disease of sin as to need a physician sent down from heaven to heal you. Now I will not determine at present, whether this high opinion you have of yourselves be just or not. Be it right or wrong, it is certain, that while you entertain it, you cannot consistently find fault with my conduct. If you are such, I have no business with you as a physician. I must

therefore rather choose to converse with these sinners, who now begin to see themselves such, and to be sensible of their need of a physician.".

Thus, as I observed, Jesus here forms an argument *ad hominem*, or vindicates his conduct even upon the principles of the Pharisees themselves. It was not now to his purpose to dispute the high opinion they had of themselves; even that opinion furnished him with a sufficient defence. But, when it was proper, he faithfully exposes their true character, as proud self-righteous hypocrites, and denounces the most terrible woes against them.

I might perhaps render the matter plainer by a familiar illustration. Suppose a man of learning in company with two persons; the one really ignorant, but highly conceited of his knowledge, and consequently unteachable; the other ignorant too, but sensible of it, and therefore desirous of instruction: suppose he should turn from the self-conceited creature, and carry on conversation with the other, who was likely to profit by it, and suppose the former should resent it, and say, "If he were indeed a scholar, as he pretends to be, he would not be fond of the society of such an ignorant dunce, but would rather choose me for a companion." How properly might a teacher reply, "O! you are a wise man; and have no need of my instruction; and therefore, as a teacher, I have no business with you; but this poor ignorant creature is sensible of his want of instruction; and therefore it is most fit I should converse with him." Such a reply has a peculiar pungency and mortifying force in it: and such Jesus used in the case before us.

To give a fuller view of this text, and to adapt it to practical purposes, I intend to describe the characters of those that are whole, and of those that are sick, in the senses here intended.

There are none of the sons of men who are really whole. Their souls are all diseased; for all have sinned, and *there is none righteous, no not one.* And perhaps there are none upon earth so proud, and so ignorant of themselves, as to affirm in so many words, that they are whole; that is, "perfectly righteous."

Therefore by the whole, cannot be meant either those who are really free from all sin, or those who imagine themselves entirely free from it. It does not appear that even the proud Pharisees were capable of flattering themselves so far. But by the whole, are meant those who are indeed guilty depraved sinners, and who are ready to make a superficial confession in words that they are sinners, but continue secure and impenitent, insensible of their guilt, their corruption, their danger, and their need of a Saviour; that is, those who are really sick, and dangerously ill, and yet are as easy, as unapprehensive of danger, as careless about applying to the physician, as if nothing ailed them. The disease is of a lethargic nature, and stupifies the unhappy creatures, so that they are not sensible of it. It renders them delirous, so that they think themselves well, when the symptoms of death are strong upon them. What multitudes of such may we see in the world! The word of God pronounces them dangerously ill; their friends may see the most deadly symptoms upon them: but alas! they are stupidly insensible of their own case. Jesus, the divine Physician, warns them of their danger, offers them his help, and prescribes to them the infallible means of recovery; but they disregard his warnings, neglect his gracious offer, and refuse to submit to his prescriptions. This is the general character of those that are whole, in the sense of my text.

By the sick, are meant those who, like the former, are really guilty corrupt sinners, in extreme need of a Saviour, and who readily confess they are such; but here lies the difference, they are not only such in reality, and they not only acknowledge that they are such, but they are deeply sensible of it, they are tenderly affected with their case: their temper and conduct, their thoughts of themselves and of Jesus Christ, their designs and endeavours are such as are natural to a soul sensibly sick of sin, and such as bear a resemblance to those of a person sick in body, and using all means for a recovery. It is the characteristic of this class of sinners, not that they are less holy, or in more danger, than others; but that they are more sensible

of their condition, and more solicitous and laborious about deliverance. They feel themselves disordered; they put themselves under the care of Jesus, the only Physician of souls; they submit to his prescriptions, and use all means for their recovery to soundness of mind, from the deadly disease of sin. This is the general character of the sick, in the sense of my text: but it is necessary I should descend to particulars.

The particular characters of the whole and the sick, in contrast, are such as these:

1. He that is whole has never had a clear affecting sight and sense of sin; but he that is sick is fully convicted, and deeply sensible of it. The one has only a general, superficial, unaffecting conviction that he is a sinner; that he has not been so good as he should have been; that his heart is somewhat disordered; and especially that he has been guilty of sundry bad actions. But alas! he neither sees his sinfulness in its full extent, nor is suitably affected with that little of it he sees. He does not clearly see the entire and universal corruption of his heart, and the numberless principles and seeds of sin that are there; the blindness of his mind as to divine things; the secret disaffection of his heart towards God and holiness; the carnality of his mind, and his lukewarmness and formality in the duties of religion. He may have a transient glance, a superficial view of these things; but he has not a deep settled conviction of them; nor is he suitably affected with what he knows of his own sinfulness. It does not appear to him such a mighty matter to have such a disordered heart towards God, to have dropped a forbidden word now and then, or to have committed a few bad actions; few, I say, for so they appear to him, though repeated times and ways beyond number. Sin appears to him a trifling peccadillo, a small evil, and he has a thousand excuses to make for it. Hence he is as easy as careless, as presumptuous in his hopes as if he believed he did not really deserve punishment from a righteous God, and therefore was in no danger. Though the leprosy of sin spreads ever so wide, and breaks out into ever so many putrid and mortifying sores, yet he is easy and

secure, and insensible of the disease. Thus, like a man in health, he is unconcerned, and neither apprehends himself sick, nor uses the least means for his recovery.

O! what multitudes of such are among us! They will confess themselves sinners, with as little concern as if they were quite free from sin, or as if they thought there was little or no danger in it.

But is it so with the poor sick sinner? O! no: he sees, he feels that his *whole head is sick, and his whole heart faint; and that from the crown of the head even unto the sole of the foot, there are nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores.* He feels the plague of a hard senseless heart, and the secret springs of wickedness within him. He feels that sin has enfeebled all his powers, and that he is no more able to exert them in religious endeavours, than a sick man is to employ himself in active life. O! into what a consternation is the sinner struck, when he is awakened out of his lethargic security, and his eyes are opened to see himself in a just light! He had flattered himself that he had a good constitution of soul, and that little or nothing ailed him; but now, he is surprised to see the strong symptoms of spiritual death upon him.

Suppose some of you, who have come here to-day vigorous and healthy, should suddenly discover the spots of a plague broken out all over you, how would it strike you with surprize and horror! Such is the surprize and horror of the awakened sinner; thus is he alarmed and amazed. So clear are his views of his entire and universal depravity and imminent danger, that he is utterly astonished he was so stupid as never to discover it before. Now also he has a deep sense of the evil of sin: he not only sees himself universally disordered, but he sees, he feels the disorder to be deadly: sin now appears to him the greatest evil upon earth, or even in hell. O! how worthy of the severest vengeance from a righteous God! how contrary to the divine purity! how base, how ungrateful a violation of the most strong and endearing obligations! how destructive to the soul, not only according to the pe-

nalty of the divine law, but in its own native tendency! During the progress of the Christian life he feels himself recovering a little, though very slowly, while he follows the prescriptions of his divine physician, and receives healing influences from him. He feels his enfeebled soul gathering a little strength; his vitiated taste gradually corrected; and the welcome symptoms of returning health; but O! he is sensibly sick still. The cure is not complete in this world; but the remains of his old disorder hang upon him all his life, and he is subject to many dangerous relapses, in which it gathers new strength, and he is afraid it is incurable.

2. They that are whole are generally easy and secure, and unapprehensive of danger: but the sick soul is alarmed and anxious; and cannot be easy, till it perceives some appearances of recovery.

He that is whole is benumbed with a stupid insensibility; but he that is sick is in pain from the disease of sin, which he sensibly feels. The one can walk about, merry and thoughtless, with a hard depraved heart within him; the other is perpetually uneasy, and, like a sick man, has no taste for any thing while he feels such a heart within him. If the one is anxious, it is with some worldly care; if the other is anxious, it is chiefly for the recovery of his dying soul. The one can give himself up to business, or pleasure, or idleness, as a man in health, and at ease; the other is apprehensive that his soul is in great danger; and, like a sick man, gives up his eager pursuits, till he sees whether he is likely to recover. He is alarmed with the deadly consequences of sin, as it exposes him to the wrath of God, the loss of heaven, and all the miseries of the infernal world. But this is not all that distresses him; he considers sin in itself as a loathsome disease, and is pained with its present effects upon him. As a sick man is not only alarmed at the consequence of his disease, namely, death, but considers it as a present pain, and as depriving him of the present comforts of life, so the sick soul feels sin as a loathsome painful disease, that now deprives it of the exalted pleasures of religion, and renders it incapable of serving its God with vigour and life. This indis-

position of soul for the exercises of religion, is, in itself, a constant uneasiness to him who is spiritually sick. How strongly does St. Paul represent the case, when he cries out, *O! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24. The image seems to be that of a living man walking about with a rotten nauseous carcase tied fast to him, which oppresses him, and he cannot, with all his efforts, cast it off; but it lies heavy upon him wherever he goes, which constrains him to cry out, "O! who shall deliver me from this dead body?" This is the character of the soul sick of sin. But he that is whole hath little or no uneasiness upon this account. If he is alarmed at all, it is with the consequence of sin; his slavish soul fears nothing but the punishment. As for the disease itself, it is so far from giving him uneasiness, that he is in love with it. It affords him sensations of pleasure, rather than of pain, and he rather dreads a recovery than the continuance of the disorder. Sin has intoxicated him to such a degree, that holiness, which is the health of the soul, is disagreeable to him, and he would rather continue languishing than recover.

My brethren, you can easily distinguish between sickness and health of body; and you are very ready to do it. And will you not enquire what state your souls are in? whether they are sensible of their sickness, and in a way of recovery! or whether they are stupified, or made delirious by the disorder, insensible of their danger, and unsolicitous about their recovery? I pray you examine yourselves in these particulars.

3. They that are whole are unwilling to apply to a physician, or to follow his prescriptions; but to the sick a physician is most welcome, and they will submit to his directions, however self-denying and mortifying. This is the point my text has particularly in view, and therefore we must take particular notice of it.

They that are in health have no regard to a physician, as such: they neither send for him, nor will they accept of his help, if offered gratis: they look upon the best of medicines with neglect, as of no use or im-

portance to them: the prescriptions proper to the sick they hear with indifference, as not being concerned. Thus it is with thousands, who imagine themselves whole in spirit. The Lord Jesus exhibits himself to the sons of men under the character of a physician; the gospel makes a free offer of his assistance to all sick souls that will freely accept it. And what reception does he generally meet with? Why, multitudes neglect him, as though they had no need of him. They may indeed pay him the compliment of professing his religion, because it happened to be the religion of their fathers and their country, but they have no eager desires after him; they are not in earnest, and laborious to obtain his assistance; they do not invite him with the most affectionate intreaties to undertake their case; they do not beg and cry for relief from him, like blind Bartimeus, Mark x. 47. *Jesus thou Son of David have mercy on us.* In short, whatever regard they may profess for him, they are not deeply sensible of their absolute need of him: they are not feelingly affected towards him, as towards a being with whom they have the nearest personal concern, a concern of the utmost importance: and the reason is, they are whole in their own apprehensions; or if they feel some qualms of conscience, some fits of painful remorse, they soon heal their own hurt slightly, *crying Peace, peace, when there is no peace.* They make a medicine of their own prayers, tears, repentance, and religious endeavours, and with this they hope to heal themselves. Thus Jesus is neglected; they give him the name of a Saviour; but in reality they look to themselves for a cure. How is the gospel, that makes the offer of relief from this heavenly physician, generally received in the world? Alas! it is neglected, as the offer of superfluous help. It is heard with that indifference with which men in health attend to the prescriptions of a physician to the sick, in which they have no immediate concern. Brethren, is this neglected gospel the only effectual mean for healing your dying souls? Then what means the stupidity and inattention with which it is heard? What means the general neglect with which it is treated? O! how af-

fecting is it to see a dying world rejecting the only restorative that can heal their disease, and preserve their lives! But alas! thus it is all around us.

Again, Jesus prescribes to the sons of men the only means of their recovery. Particularly he enjoins them no more to drink poison; that is, no more to indulge themselves in sin, which is, in its own nature, the most deadly poison to the soul. And what can be more reasonable than this? Yet this is what a stupid world principally objects against, and multitudes rather die than submit to it. A disordered empoisoned constitution of soul is to them the most agreeable. This divine Physician likewise requires them to use the means of grace instituted in the gospel; to meditate upon their condition, and obtain a deep sense of their disorder; to read and hear the word with solemn attention, and self-application; to pray with frequency and importunity. These are his prescriptions to all that would recover under his hands. But how few observe them in earnest! What a general neglect of the means of grace prevails in our country, or what a careless attendance upon them! which is equally pernicious. Christ also enjoins them to submit to him as their Physician, to flatter themselves no longer that they can heal themselves by means within their own power, but to apply his blood as the only healing balm to their wounded souls. But alas! they disregard this grand prescription; they will not submit to him; but, like an obstinate patient, will have their own way, though eternal death should be the consequence.

But this is not the case of the sinner spiritually sick: he will do any thing, he will submit to any thing, if it may but save him from the mortal disease of sin. How ardently does he long after Jesus? With what cheerfulness does he put himself under his care! With what joy and gratitude does he hear the offer of free salvation in the gospel! and how dear is the gospel to his heart on this account! With what eager wishful eyes does he look upon his Physician! How does he delight to feel himself under the operation of his hand! to feel him probe his wounds, and then apply the balm of his blood! With what anxiety does he observe the symp-

toms, and inquire whether he is upon the recovery or not! and O! with what pleasure does he discover the signs of returning health! to feel a little eager appetite for spiritual food! to feel a little spiritual life in religious exercises! to feel himself able to run in the way of God's commandments! to feel the principles of sin weakened within him! How sweet is this! How willingly does he submit to the prescriptions of his physician, and attend upon the means of grace, however disagreeable to a carnal mind! He makes the law of God the rule of his regimen, and would not indulge himself in any thing which that sacred dispensatory forbids. He guards against relapses, and keeps out of the way of temptation, as far as possible, lest his frail constitution should be hurt. The society of sinners is like the company of persons infected with a contagious disease, which he is in danger of catching, and therefore he avoids it as cautiously as he can. Let those that think their souls healthy and vigorous, boast of their strength, and what mighty things they can do in religion; as for him, he feels his weakness; he feels he can do nothing aright, but just as he receives daily strength from Christ. He feels himself every day troubled with some disorder or other, yea with a complication of them: therefore he is daily sensible of his need of the physician, and makes daily application to him. He does not begrudge to take time from his other affairs, and, as it were, to keep his chamber a while, that he may use means for the recovery of his soul: for, O! if he lose his soul, what would the whole world profit him! In short, the sick sinner is a tender delicate frail creature, entirely subject to the prescriptions of Christ, and every day taking means from him; anxious for his recovery, and willing to submit to any thing that may promote it. This is the man, in our Christ-despising world, that gives Jesus a most willing and welcome reception, and embraces his gospel as containing all his salvation and all his desire. O! that there were many such in our world! for this man is in a hopeful way of recovery. This world is a vast hospital, full of dying souls: Jesus descends from heaven and enters among them, offering them health, and eter-

nal life if they will but submit to his directions, which are as easy as possible. Repentance indeed, and some other bitter ingredients, are included in a religion for sinners; and how can it be otherwise, since these are necessary for their recovery in the very nature of things? Besides, even these are sweet, when taken in the vehicle of a Saviour's dying love; and many a soul has found more noble pleasure in generous sorrow for sin than ever they found in the commission of it.

But after all, the generality die in their sins, amidst the full means of their recovery; and the great reason is, they will not be convinced of their danger, nor be persuaded to apply to the Physician. O! how tragical and affecting a case is this! and what may render it the more so to us, is, that it is the case of some of us. Yes, my brethren, though I am unwilling to harbour one hard thought of any of you, yet I cannot avoid concluding that there are some, I am afraid many souls, in this assembly, who are not sensible of their dangerous disease, and their need of Christ as a Physician, and therefore are in danger of perishing without him. Sin, like a strong dose of opium, has stupified you, and you feel easy and whole-hearted, as if nothing ailed you, when the symptoms of death are strong upon you. We can weep and lament over the sick-bed of a dying friend, and we even drop our tears after him into the grave: but shall we drop no tears this day over dying souls, that are so numerous among us? What renders the case the more affecting is, that they perish by their own wilful obstinacy, under the hands of an all healing Physician:—*O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night over the slain of the daughters of my people!* Ye secure and whole-hearted sinners, must it not shock you to think that Jesus Christ, the only Physician, gives you up? You see, in my text, he looks upon you as persons that he has no business with. He had rather converse with publicans and sinners than with you, as having more hopes of success among them. Let publicans and sinners take the hint, and be encouraged to apply to Jesus. Come, ye profligates and libertines, drunkards, swearers, whore-

mongers, come sinners of the most abandoned characters, apply to this Physician. He is willing to heal you: He offers you healing. *Wilt thou be made whole?* is his question to you this day. He is also perfectly able, able to save to the uttermost, however inveterate your disease may be. If the children of the kingdom shut themselves out; if self-righteous Pharisees reject this Physician, and die in their sin, do you come in; put yourselves under his care, submit to his prescriptions, and you shall yet live, and be restored to perfect health and eternal life. Rugged as you are, you are very proper materials for the temple of God. If you are sensibly sick, it should not discourage you from entering yourselves into Christ's hospital, and putting yourselves under his care; nay, this should even encourage you. Your being sick of sin is a necessary qualification to render you his patients: they are such he loves to converse with, and they are only such who are recovered by him. Therefore this day give yourselves up to him as his willing patients. Cry to him to undertake your case: *Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed.* Submit to his prescriptions, and follow his directions, and you shall live for ever.

I shall conclude my subject, by giving answers from it to some questions that may arise in your minds on this occasion.

What is the reason that the world lies in such a dead security around us? Whence is it there is so much sin in the world, and so little fear of punishment? Whence is it that men will entertain such hopes of heaven upon such slight evidences, or rather with the full evidence of the word of God against them? Alas! the reason is, they are whole in their own imagination: they think themselves well, and therefore apprehend no danger, but lie in a dead inactive sleep.

What is the reason why so many neglect the means of grace in public and private? Whence is it that there are so many prayerless families and prayerless closets among us? Why is the Bible thrown by in some families, as a piece of useless lumber? Why is the house of God so thinly frequented in many places, and the table of the Lord almost deserted? Why is christian conver-

sation so unfashionable? and why do we hear so few inquiries from sinners, what they shall do to be saved? The reason is, they imagine themselves well; they are whole-hearted; and therefore, it is no wonder they neglect the means of recovery: they think they have no more to do with them than persons in health with physic. The only method to bring to use those means in earnest, is to make them sensible of their dangerous disease. And O! that their ministers may use all proper means with them for this end, and that divine grace may render them effectual!

What is the reason that the means of grace are attended upon by others with so much formality and indifference? Whence is it that there are so many lukewarm spiritless prayers and solemn mockeries of the great God? so many wandering eyes and wandering hearts in the heavenly exercise of praise, and in hearing the most solemn and affecting truths? Whence is it that all the religion of many is nothing but a dull round of insipid lifeless formalities? Alas! the same reason returns: they are whole in their own conceit. And how can they, while they flatter themselves with this imagination, use those means in earnest, which are intended for the recovery of the sick? The sick will use them in earnest; but to others they are mere customary formalities.

Would you know what is the reason that the blessed Jesus, the most glorious and benevolent person that ever appeared in our world, is so generally neglected? O! why is his love forgotten by those very creatures for whom he shed his blood? Why are there not more longings and cries for him? Why is not a Saviour, an almighty and complete Saviour, more sought after by perishing sinners? Why is his name of so little importance among them? How comes it to pass, that he may continue for months, for years, for scores of years, offering salvation to them, intreating, commanding, and persuading them to accept it, and warning them of the dreadful ruin they will bring on themselves by rejecting it? Whence is it that, after all, he is despised and rejected of men, and that but very few will give him suitable enter-

tainment? Whence is this shocking conduct in reasonable creatures? O! it is the same old reason still; they are whole-hearted, and do not feel themselves dangerously ill; and how then can they be solicitous about a physician!

What is the reason that the gospel, which reveals and offers life and salvation to the world, meets with so cold a reception? Why does not the way of salvation therein discovered spread transport and praise over all the earth? Why does not the song of angels sound from every human tongue, *Glory to God in the highest for peace proclaimed on earth, and good-will towards men?* Why does the christian world in general practically despise that religion which they profess? O! it is because they are whole in their own imaginations, though dying by thousands all over the world. It is because they are not sensible of their need of the gospel and its blessings. O! if they were but once sensible how dangerously ill they are, they would soon change their opinion.

Let me bring this matter still nearer home. Whence is it that the gospel, even with all the disadvantages that attend it from my unskilful lips, does not meet with a more affectionate welcome among you? There are many, I am afraid, who statedly or occasionally attend here to hear the gospel, who yet despise it in their hearts, or do not affectionately embrace it. And what is the reason of this? May I not venture to affirm, that the gospel has been dear to some, who have sat under no better ministry? Must not this then be the reason? That there are multitudes of whole-hearted sinners, even among us, that mingle among us in the same assembly, and hear the gospel from the same lips! Multitudes who are insensible of their disease, and consequently of their need of a physician! O! inquire, whether this be not the true reason why the gospel meets with such a cold reception among us!

Would you know why so many fools make a mock of sin! Why they can go on impenitent in it, apprehending little or no danger from it! Why they are every day sinning, and every day merry, thoughtless, and gay! Why they can love and delight in sin,

which God hates, and which he has threatened with such heavy vengeance! Alas! the reason is, they are whole: they do not look upon sin as a deadly disease that requires a cure, but as their health, which ought to be cherished. This is the disease under which our body politic now languishes. It is this disease that enfeebles our counsels and undertakings; but who suspects that this has any bad influence in the case! Who endeavours the cure of this, as the most effectual cure for a languishing bleeding country!

What is the reason that men are cautious of coming near a house infected with a contagious sickness, and that duty itself can hardly constrain them to enter, but that they can venture their souls without cause into insnaring company, and within the sphere of temptation? Whence is it, that, for the recovery of their mortal bodies, they will submit to the most self-denying regimen, take the most nauseous draughts, and be at great pains and expence, whilst, for their souls, they will take no pains, use no means, deny themselves in no gratification? What is the reason of this? O! it is the same reason still; they do not feel the least sickness of their souls, but imagine they have a firm, invulnerable constitution, incapable of infection in the most contagious places, and that it will recover by its native strength, without any extrinsic help.

Would you know why there are so much spiritual pride and vanity in the world? why so many religious *Thrasos*, vain boasters, who imagine they can turn to God when they please in their own strength, and who pretend they can perform such great things in religion, when they are disposed to make the attempt! O! it is because they do not know they are sick: they do not feel themselves enfeebled by sin, and disabled from doing any thing truly good. You have seen some in a delirium, who imagined they were well, able to go about, and perform their usual business, when in the mean time they were under the power of a deadly disease, and the symptoms of death perhaps then upon them. Just so it is with these ostentatious boasters; and could you but cure their delirium, and make them

sensible of their disorders, they would soon feel and confess themselves poor weak languishing creatures, unable to do any thing, but just as they receive strength from on high.

Would you know why so many hate faithful preaching, and resent it if any means are used for their recovery? It is because they imagine themselves well; and such do not like to be teased with the importunities of a physician, nor to have disagreeable medicines forced upon them. O! were they but sensible of their condition, they would willingly submit to the prescriptions.

Would you know where you should begin your religion; or what is the grand preparative for your embracing the gospel in such a manner as to be saved by it? To this interesting inquiry you may easily infer an answer from what has been said. Begin your religion in a deep sense of sin; let your wound be probed to the quick, in order to a thorough cure, otherwise it would be but slightly skinned over, and it will again break out, and prove more dangerous than ever: labour to get a deep sense of your disease, and then you will so give yourselves up to the Physician, that he may apply to you what he thinks proper, and make an effectual cure.

Some of you perhaps have wondered why you see poor mourning creatures here and there, that cannot live as you do, thoughtless, careless, and unaffected. You ascribe it perhaps to melancholy, to preciseness, to hypocrisy, or an affectation of singularity. But I will tell you the true reason, They are sick; they feel themselves sick; whereas you imagine yourselves well; and you cannot wonder that the sick and the healthy should behave in a different manner. Why do they not neglect Jesus Christ, as you do? O! it is because they are sick, heart-sick, and therefore must long and cry for a physician. Why do they not indulge themselves in sin, as you do? It is because they are sick of it; they see it to be a mortal poison, and they cannot be easy while they feel it working through their frame. Why do they use the means with so much earnestness? Why do they pray, and

hear, and attend upon every religious ordinance with so much zeal and solicitude? Why can they not, like you, attend upon them in a careless formal way, or entirely neglect them? O! the reason is, they are sick, heart-sick, and they are using these means for their recovery. And did you view yourselves in the same just light, you would use them too: Yes, you would be as strict, as earnest, as laborious, as any of them. Why do they not, like you, abandon themselves, and devote all their time, to some worldly pursuit? O! it is because they are sick, and must take time for the use of means for their recovery, whatever be omitted. Why are they so much afraid of temptation, and keep out of its way? It is because thy are afraid of a relapse, and that sin, their old disease, will renew its strength. Whence are they so often filled with doubts, and fears, and anxious perplexities? O! it is because the symptoms of the disorder are doubtful, and they know not whether they are in a way of recovery or not. When they are satisfied in this point, then they can rejoice, and that with a joy more noble than you are capable of.

And, poor sick souls, be of good cheer, you shall yet be healed. Yes, there is balm in Gilead; there is a Physician there; Jesus can heal you; and, blessed be his name, he is as willing as he is able. Continue stedfast in the use of the means appointed for your recovery, and he will make them efficacious. Yes, these sick souls of yours shall yet be as healthy and vigorous as an angel, and you shall ere long be advanced to the region of immortal health, where the inhabitants no more say, I am sick; where you shall breathe a pure salubrious air, agreeable to your delicate constitutions, and be vigorous and lively for ever.

Do not think much of it, that a disease so inveterate and mortal should be painful and difficult in the cure. The operation will not last long; and if it does but succeed, the pain and self-denial will be infinitely more than compensated.

The deep sense of your disorder is often discouraging to you: O! you are afraid it will at last prove mortal. But this very thing ought to encourage you. The persons

that I cannot speak one comfortable word to, are not of your character; they are the secure whole-hearted sinners; but for you there is strong consolation; so strong, that it may bear down all your fears before it. The sense of your disorder qualifies you for the Physician, and renders you proper objects of his care. The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, the broken-hearted, are the characters of the persons that he has to do with, and who are recovering under his hands. And are not these your characters? They are indeed humbling and mortifying; but O! they are encouraging, as they prepare you for Christ's healing care.

But as for you, whole-hearted sinners, I must pronounce you lost and dead souls. Jesus himself has declared, that he has no business with such as you. And if he casts you off, O! what other physician can you employ? Alas! you will die in your sins!—Die in your sins! O! dreadful! better die in a ditch, or a dungeon, than die in your sins! Therefore now labour to be sensible of your disorder, while it is curable; for all that are not healed in this life, are given up as incurable for ever. Now apply to Christ as a Physician, for he is willing to undertake your cure!

SERMON LIII.

A Sight of Christ the Desire and Delight of Saints in all Ages *.

JOHN viii. 56.

Your father Abraham rejoiced (earnestly desired) *to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.*

WHEN we see the crowd, the unthinking majority of mankind in our day, neglect the Lord Jesus, we see nothing new. This neglect is indeed stupid, ungrateful, criminal, and extremely affecting and lamentable; but in this respect, as well as others, *there is no new thing under the sun.* The blessed Jesus has been despised and rejected of men, in every age, ever since sin first entered into the world, and raised enmity against him in the mind of man.

But, blessed be God, such excellency has attracted love and admiration in every age. He has been loved and adored, not only by the angels, who know him best, and are spectators of his glory in his native heaven, where he keeps his court in conspicuous splendor, but also by some poor sinners of the race of man, in every period of time, since his glory first dawned upon the world in that early promise, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head,* Gen. iii. 15. John, and his cotemporary christians, who lived upon earth when *the word was made flesh, and dwelt among men,* beheld his glory, a God-like glory, *as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,* John i. 14. In these dregs of time, when *iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold,* there are some, nay, there are many scattered here and there through the world, who believe in and love an unseen

* A Sacramental Sermon.

Saviour; and, while they believe and love, *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob also, and all the pious patriarchs, who lived in the early dawn of the gospel-light, looked forward with eager eyes to the promised and expected rising of the sun of righteousness. His beams were but faintly reflected upon them; yet they could distinguish his light from that of every inferior luminary. They foresaw some illustrious personage, superior to themselves, and all the ordinary messengers of God, about to appear in the world; and though it does not appear to me that they distinctly knew who he should be, or what should be the peculiarities of his office, and how he should perform it*, yet they expected him under the welcome character of a Deliverer, and that in some way which divine wisdom would appoint he should bring salvation to penitent sinners. Thus Jesus congratulates his disciples upon their peculiar privilege, above the best men of the preceding times: *Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear: for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them: and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them*, Matt. xiii. 16, 17. Their desiring to hear and see these things, which the gospel reveals, implies that they had some general imperfect knowledge of them; for there can be no desire at all of a thing entirely unknown; but their knowledge was indistinct and obscure, and not satisfactory to their pious curiosity. Therefore, as St. Peter informs us, the prophets did not fully understand their own prophesies, but *inquired and searched diligently concerning the salvation and grace* now brought to us; *searching*

* It is evident, that the apostles before Christ's resurrection, though they enjoyed the light not only of the antient types, promises, and prophesies, but also of many instructions from his own lips, yet were ignorant of his death and resurrection, the nature and extent of his kingdom, and many other important peculiarities of the gospel. And much more so, may we suppose, were the prophets and good men of ancient times. Several great divines have, I think, represented their faith as much more particular and distinct than it appears to have been.

what, or what manner of time the spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; to whom it was revealed, that not they, but we should fully enjoy the advantage of their own prophesies, or that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven; which things, not only the prophets, but even *the angels* of Heaven, those superior intelligencers, *desire to look into* and study. 1 Pet. i. 10—12.

To the same purpose St. Paul speaks concerning Abraham, Noah, and the other pious patriarchs: *These all died in faith, not having received the promises;* that is, the accomplishment of them, *but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them;* that is, they saw by faith, though afar off, at the distance of thousands of years, the blessings contained in those early promises, particularly that great all-comprehending blessing, the Messiah; and were persuaded they should be fulfilled in due time, and embraced them with eager affection and confidence, as their highest hope and happiness.

This is the influence which even the faint discovery of a Saviour had upon good men many ages ago; but St. Paul tells us, whose privilege it is to live in gospel-day, that *God has provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect,* Heb. xi. 13, 40.: for us he hath provided the clear revelation of the gospel; and shall not this have a proportionable influence upon us? We should at least be as much affected with these things as Abraham, who was far inferior to us in external advantages; and how Abraham was affected, we are told by Jesus himself in the text: *Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.*

The Jews, in the context, are pleading the cause of their own pride and self-confidence, against some just reflections which Christ had made upon them. When he insinuates that they were slaves to sin; and therefore stood in need of freedom from him, they resent

it as a scandalous imputation, intolerable to a people so proud and tenacious of their liberty; and either not understanding in what sense he meant they were slaves, or imagining that they could not be the servants of sin, who were the natural descendants of Abraham, they think to defend themselves by pleading, *We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free!* I cannot see how they could have made good this assertion; for they had been in bondage to the Babylonians, the Syrians, and the Greeks, and were then in subjection to the Roman empire; but what is there so false or absurd but men will plead in their own defence, when once they have renounced the gospel! Jesus in his answer tells them, that the dispute at present was not, Who was their natural father? but, Who was their father in a moral sense? And he lays down this principle, upon which to settle their moral genealogy, namely, That they were his children, whom they resembled in temper and practice. Now they did not resemble Abraham, much less God, whom they also called their Father, and therefore they were not the children of Abraham, or of God, in such a sense as to be free from slavery to sin; which was the sense then under consideration: but they resembled the Devil, in doing his lusts, and particularly in their love of falshood, and enmity to truth; and therefore, says he, *Ye are of your father the Devil.* In the progress of the debate the Jews were offended, because Christ insinuated that he was greater than Abraham and the prophets. And my text may be considered as referring both to this and the former argument. As referring to the last, it may be thus understood: "Abraham himself was sensible how much I am superior to him; for he rejoiced at the distant sight of my day, when a much greater Person than he should appear upon the stage of the world, from whom himself, as well as his posterity, and all nations of the earth, should receive the most important blessings." As referring to the former, the meaning may be: "You cannot be the genuine children of Abraham, in the sense now under consideration! for you are not at all like him. You

live in my day, and yet rejoice not in it; but he earnestly desired a sight of it, and rejoiced in the sight, though faint and afar off. His disposition and yours towards me are entirely different, and therefore you cannot be his true spiritual children." Thus, in both these views, the text contains a conclusive argument in vindication of Jesus Christ, and in confutation of his enemies.

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day. The day of Christ primarily signifies the time when he appeared in the flesh, and conversed with men. So the days of John the Baptist, the days of Noah, &c. signify the time when John the Baptist and Noah lived upon earth. Matt xi. 12. and chap. xxiv. 37. But we are to consider the Lord Jesus as coming into the world under a public character; that is, as a Saviour of sinners, and as the improver of the Mosaic and Patriarchal religion, by the introduction of the gospel-dispensation; and therefore the day of Christ, which Abraham desired to see, must signify the time when he should appear upon earth as a great Prophet, to make a more perfect revelation of the will of God; the time when he should offer the great propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world, of which the sacrifices of former dispensations were but types and shadows; the time when he should receive dominion, glory, and a kingdom from the Ancient of Days, which should not be confined to the Jews, but extend to *all people, nations, and languages,* Dan. vii. 14.; or, in other words, the time when the great radical promise to Abraham should be fulfilled, *That in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed,* Gen. xxii. 18.; the time when the dispensation of the gospel should be set up in its full glory, the most perfect dispensation of religion on this side heaven; which is not to give way to another, like that of Moses, but to continue to the end of the world. This is the illustrious day here intended; and, according to this explication, you see it includes not only the time of Christ's appearance upon earth, but also the whole space from that time to the end of the world, or the whole time of the gospel dispensation. This is a long and glorious day,

and in this day it is our happy lot to live. Abraham would have thought himself happy to live in the same age with us; he would rather have lived in Hanover * than in Canaan with all his riches; and would rather have been a member of our church than the great patriarch of the Jewish church.

The time of Christ's appearance upon earth, and of the gospel dispensation introduced by him, may be called a day, not only in conformity to the usual language of scripture, in which the time of a person's life, the duration of a thing, or the time allotted for any business, is called a day, though it should contain many hundreds or thousands of natural days; I say, it may be called a day, not only on this account, but also to intimate, that it is a season of light to the moral world, a season when the Sun of righteousness shines upon this benighted earth, pierces the glooms of ignorance that covered it, and brings the deepest mysteries to light; a season, when the perfections of the divine nature, the way of pardon and acceptance for obnoxious mankind, the wonders of the unseen world, and the things that belong to our peace are displayed in full splendor. The night of heathen darkness, and the twilight of the Abrahamic and Mosaic dispensation kindle into day, wherever the gospel shines. Abraham lived in the twilight, or early dawn; and therefore, says Christ, *he desired to see my day.* It is translated, he *rejoiced* to see my day; and it must be owned, this is the usual sense of the original word †; but this cannot be its meaning here, for this

* The name of a county in Virginia, where this sermon was preached.

† ἠγαλλιάσατο—Since ἀγαλλιᾶμαι, which is commonly used metaphorically, and signifies *to exult* or *leap for joy*, literally signifies *to leap*, why may it not be understood literally without a metaphor in this place? As if he had said, "Abraham leaped up, he raised himself like one endeavouring to catch a glance of some distant object, that he might see the distant gleamings of Christ's day."—But this new criticism I only hint, and submit it to examination.

The editor of these Discourses of Mr. Davies, thinks it not improper to subjoin a criticism upon this word from Mr. Anthony Blackwall. "I beg my reader's leave, says he, to propose one conjecture, by putting down ἀγαλλιαᾶμαι, as a peculiarity in St. John, signifying *to desire with vehemence*. And this sense affixed to it, which is not strained or

would make a needless tautology with the last part of the verse, *he was glad.* To rejoice, and to be glad, is the same thing: but would hardly be sense to say, *Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and rejoiced.* Besides, to rejoice that he might see, seems absurd; for his rejoicing could not be to the end that he might see, but because he did see. I therefore conclude the word here must signify a strong transport of desire, and should be rendered, "your father Abraham earnestly desired that he might see my day: he wished to live in an age when Christ and the gospel should be fully revealed. From the dawn he looked forward with eager desire to see the sun rising, and the heavenly day shining around him, revealing to his view those lovely prospects which were then wrapt in darkness. He longed to see that illustrious Personage springing from his seed," *in whom all nations should be blessed,* "and who was his Lord and Saviour, as well as his son."

Nor was his desire in vain: for Jesus adds, *he saw it;* that is, my day. His desire was granted, and he was favoured with the sight he longed for. But here it may be queried, "how, or in what sense, could Abraham be said to see Christ's day, since he died so long before his appearance in the flesh?" To this sundry answers have been given, particularly, 1. That he saw Christ's day by faith in the promises given him, of the accomplishment of which he was confident; and this confidence inspired him with joy. *Faith,* says the apostle, *is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,* Heb. xi. 1; and such was Abraham's faith in the promise of a Messiah. He saw his day by faith, and was persuaded of his certain appearance, and embraced him, as though he

unnatural, will solve what seems to me to be a gross tautology in our translation. It is this, "he rejoiced to see my day, and saw it, and was glad;" that is, he was glad to see my day, and saw it, and so was glad.—In this signification it runs easy and clean, he earnestly wished or desired to see my day, and saw it and rejoiced. The Persian, Syriac, and Arabic versions all give it this sense, and the particle ἵνα in the original, seems to require it.—It is a very natural metonymy, whereby antecedents and consequents are put for each other." *Sacred Classics,* Vol. I. p. 35, 36.

had been then in the reach of his arms. 2. Abraham might be said to see the day of Christ in that strange transaction, the offering up of his own son Isaac. This is the most striking typical representation, I think, which we find in the whole Bible, of the manner in which the world should be redeemed by Jesus Christ; namely, by human sacrifice, and by God's making his own Son a propitiatory sacrifice, as Abraham was commanded to offer up his; and probably this seemingly hard and unnatural trial was imposed upon him, as a peculiar favour, that he might see by a significant action, what he so earnestly longed to see, the manner of man's redemption. This welcome sight he probably had upon mount Moriah, where he went to offer up his only son. And the inscription he, as it were, left upon that mount, may intimate thus much, *In the mount of the Lord it* (that is, the day of Christ) *shall be seen.* Gen. xxii. 14. This may also be St. Paul's meaning, when he says, Abraham received Isaac from the dead in a figure, or typical representation, which plainly presignified to him the resurrection of Christ from the dead, without a figure; that is, literally, after he had been actually sacrificed for the sins of men*. This appears to me as probable a sense as any. Yet, 3. Perhaps it may mean, that when Jehovah appeared to Abraham in human form, and familiarly conversed with him, it was a prelude to his incarnation, and gave him a clear idea of the day of Christ's actual appearance in the flesh.

But in whatever sense he saw it, it was a very welcome and joyful sight to him; for Jesus farther tells us, *he saw it and was glad.* Light is sweet; but no light was so sweet to Abraham's eyes as that of *the day of the Son of man.* He saw him not as Simeon, when

* Heb. xi. 19. Dr. Warburton, in his Divine Legation, offers so many plausible things in favour of this sense, that I think it has some considerable appearance of probability. And thus he and Wolfius apply their text, urging that ἐν παραβολῃ, answers to and signifies a typical representation. The word καὶ prefixed, καὶ ἐν παραβολῃ which shews there is a particular stress to be laid upon ἐν παραβολῃ, confirms this exposition: as if he had said, "he received him from the dead, not only as he narrowly escaped death, but also in a figure? that is, as a figure or type of something future."

he took him in his arms, and wished that he might never take up any thing else, but depart in peace from this world of sin and sorrow; but Abraham saw him in such a light, as to fill his heart with joy and gladness, though only through the medium of faith, and not of sense.

These remarks may suffice to explain the text, as it refers to this patriarch: but it is your personal advantage I aim at, and therefore I shall make some reflections upon it, as it may be accommodated to you: and the reflections are such as these:

That the dispensation of the gospel may be called a bright and illustrious day:

That it is a day which good men under former dispensations earnestly desired a sight of:

That good men earnestly desire clear discoveries of Jesus Christ, and his gospel:

That these desires shall be accomplished: and,

That the accomplishment of them affords great joy.

I. The dispensation of the gospel may be called a bright and illustrious day.

When John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, was born, the morning-star arose, or as his father Zacharias expresses it, *The day-spring from on high visited us.* Jesus is *the sun of righteousness,* Mal. iv. 2.; *the light of the world,* John viii. 12. and chap. xii. 46.; *a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel,* Luke ii. 32.: and when he made his appearance in the world, then, we are told, *The people that sat in darkness saw great light; and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death, light sprung up.* Matt. iv. 16. To carry on the metaphor with uniformity, the gospel is called the day of salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2.; the light, 2 Cor. iv. 4.; a marvellous light, 1 Pet. ii. 9.; a true light shining, when the darkness is past, 1 John ii. 8.; and Christians are said to be light, Ephes. v. 8.—the *children of the light and the day.* 1 Thess. v. 5.

There is good reason for the use of this significant metaphorical language; for as the day discovers the fair face of nature, and opens her lovely prospects to view, which were unseen while covered with darkness,

so the gospel reveals the perfections of God, the wonderful scheme of Providence, the beauties of holiness, the nature of true religion, the duty of man in all its extent, the wonders of the scheme of redemption through Jesus Christ, and the method in which obnoxious sinners of the race of man may be reconciled to God, the prospects of life and immortality, and the important realities of the eternal world. All these are brought to light by the gospel, after they had long been concealed, or seen but faintly through the glimmering light of reason in the heathen, and the typical or prophetical revelation of the Mosaic dispensation.

The gospel-day, like a light shining in a dark place, pierces the darkness of the human heart, reveals the mysteries of iniquity, and the depths of Satan there, and discovers sin in all its native deformities. This penetrating light, when enforced by his power who first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has flashed conviction upon many a secure conscience, and opened the most surprising discoveries to many a blind mind. The gospel, like clear day-light, shews us the way of duty and happiness, for which the world had long groped in darkness, so that now we may walk in it without stumbling; for *if any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light.* John xi. 9, 10.

Divine things are not only brought to light by the gospel, but also represented in the most amiable and engaging view; especially when there is not only a clear medium without, but the organ of spiritual vision, the mind, is rectified so as to be able to perceive those objects in this medium. If we should suppose a man had spent twenty years of his life in darkness, and never seen nature about him in that lovely and magnificent view in which it appears through the medium of light, and should he be suddenly brought into the light, how would he be overwhelmed with delightful astonishment at the first sight of the universe. What amazing prospects, what new and glorious wonders, would open to his eyes! How different would the face of nature appear from the view he had of it while an inhabitant of darkness! Thus is the sinner surprized,

when not only the gospel shines round him, but his mind is also enlightened to view divine things in that heavenly light. Then, as St. Peter expresses it, he is brought *out of darkness into God's marvellous light*, 1 Peter ii. 9.; a light that represents the most marvellous things to his astonished sight. Then in what a new and glorious light does the great God appear, and all the truths revealed in the gospel! What new and surprising views has he of himself, of sin, and of the eternal world! all is real, interesting, and affecting! O! my brethren, have you ever been introduced into this marvellous light? or are you, like the birds of night, lovers and inhabitants of darkness still?

Again, In that darkness which overspread the world before the introduction of christianity, the wicked spirits of hell, like beasts of prey, roamed this wilderness, and discovered great power in their oracles, in possessing the bodies of men, &c. But when the gospel shone upon the world in its meridian glory, then these terrors of the night fled to their den, and could no more roam at large, as they had done.

The day is the time for work and action: so the gospel-day is the season to work out our salvation. It is not a time for sleep and sloth, but for labour and action. *This is the accepted time; this is the day of salvation.*

This, my brethren, is the glorious and blessed day in which we live. Let us therefore inquire, *Are we the children of the light and of the day?* For this purpose inquire, whether it is day within, as well as without? that is, whether your minds have been divinely enlightened within, as the light of the gospel shines round you without? Is not that sacred light to some of you like the sun to a blind man? that is, it makes day without him, but all is dark to him, and he sees nothing! Are there not some of you blind to the glory of God in the gospel, to the evil of sin, and the great realities of the eternal world! The light shines indeed, but it shines in a thick malignant darkness, that comprehends it not; a darkness impenetrable even to the bright beams of the Sun of righteousness. Is not your heart a dungeon of darkness, where the

vilest lusts crawl, like toads and serpents? Do you not hate the light, and refuse to come into the light, lest your evil deeds should be reproved? Do you not practise the works of darkness, works that will not bear the public view, much less the examination of the supreme tribunal? Have you ever beheld *the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the glory of the word made flesh, and dwelling among men, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?* O! have you ever seen how lovely, how suitable, and how glorious that Saviour is, who is revealed in the gospel? I beg you would put these questions home to your hearts, that you may know whether you are the children of the light, or whether you are in darkness even until now.

If you have hitherto chosen darkness rather than light, remember, the gospel, which has lighted many a pilgrim to heaven, will only shew you the way to hell, and bring you, as it were, to a more horrible precipice, from whence you will fall with the greater violence into the pit. If you perish from under the gospel, it will be with a peculiarly aggravated destruction. *Tophet has been prepared of old;* and, like a furnace always supplied, it has been heating more and more for thousands of years, and now, under the gospel, it is heated more than ever; and the hottest place there is reserved for you, if you still resist the light, and continue in darkness. O! remember who it was that made that awful declaration, *This is the condemnation;* that is, this is the occasion of the most aggravated condemnation. *that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.* John iii. 19. *If the gospel be hid, it is only to them that are lost.* 2 Cor. iv. 3.

But I doubt not but sundry of you not only have day without, but within you: *God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shined in your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Blessed are your eyes, for they see.* And O! what affecting sights have they seen! what vileness and deformity in sin! and what beauty in holiness! what corruption and

depravity in yourselves, and what glory and excellency in God! what meanness and unworthiness in yourselves, and what loveliness, what all-perfect righteousness, with attractive glory in Jesus Christ! what vanity in this world, and what reality and importance in the world to come! Well, this day is but the dawn of immortal day, which you shall enjoy in heaven. You are children of light, and you are hastening to that world, where God himself shall be your light, and there shall be no more night. Therefore, *walk as the children of light, and let your light so shine before men, that they, by seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Bless God that the gospel shines around you, and opens such discoveries to your view. To-day it shews you a feast of fat things for hungry souls: it shews you that strange sight, which struck all nature with horror, when it first appeared; I mean the Son of God hanging on a cross, and expiring there for guilty man. This ordinance is a bright ray of evangelical light; and it helps you to see the love and agonies of Jesus, the great atonement he made for sin, and the method of your pardon and salvation.—Come then, ye children of light, come and gaze, and wonder at these astonishing sights?

Again, Since it is day-time with us, let us shake off slumber, and rise to work. Awake to righteousness, sinners! Awake, and call upon God, and betake yourselves to work; to the important, but long-delayed and neglected work of salvation. The night of death is coming, when no man can work: then the Sun of Righteousness will be set, and the day of the gospel be over, as to you; and the Lord will cause darkness, and your feet will stumble on the dark mountains, and the shadows of the everlasting night shall be stretched out over your heads. Now therefore rise and do the work of life: do it now, in this your day; or it must remain for ever undone.—And, ye who are the children of the light, abound in the work of the Lord while your day lasts. Never let him find you idle, but always busy in doing good. Do not you sleep, as do others; but watch and be sober. God has distinguished you

with his grace, above thousands of his eminent servants; and this lays you under peculiar obligations of duty to him:—Which leads me to add,

II. That the dispensation of the gospel is a day, which good men under former dispensations earnestly desired a sight of.

The most that they generally knew was, that religion should be much improved, and the world receive great advantage, by some illustrious person that should arise;—and they desired themselves to share in that improvement and advantage. They had a general persuasion that God was reconcilable, but, O! to know the person by whom, and the manner in which this reconciliation was to be brought about! They had many intimations, that it was to be brought about by sacrifice, or the offering up the innocent for the guilty; but they wanted nearer views of this great mystery. They had ordinances of worship divinely instituted; but these were so expensive, burdensome, and comparatively carnal, that it is no wonder they looked forward with eager eyes to the time of reformation, when a more easy, spiritual, and noble method of worship would be introduced: they hoped for happiness beyond the grave, and believed a future state of rewards and punishments; but the sanctions of the dispensations under which they lived consisted so much in temporal rewards and punishments, as to render those of the world to come less clear and affecting. No wonder then they longed for gospel-day, by which life alone and immortality are brought fully to light, and all doubts and suspicions entirely removed. In short, so much darkness, uncertainty, and perplexity attended many things of great importance, that are now clearly revealed, that it was natural and unavoidable for every good man that was concerned to please God and enjoy his favour, to desire farther satisfaction, and look forward with eager eyes to the rising Sun, which should cast a divine light upon these interesting secrets.

Now this happiness, which they so ardently desired, we enjoy: and shall we make light of it, and neglect to improve our peculiar privileges! How would Abra-

ham have rejoiced to hear what we hear this day, and sit down at the sacred table, which is now prepared for us! And shall we dare to neglect it, or attend upon it in a languid careless irreverent manner! Abraham would have willingly exchanged his personal converse with Jehovah, and all his privileges as the patriarch of the Jewish church, for the privilege of the meanest christian among us. And shall not we esteem and improve what he esteemed so very highly, and longed for so ardently? Brethren, if we do not all crowd into heaven in a body, it is our own fault in a peculiar degree. Our external advantages for religion are greater than those of Abraham, the friend of God; than those of Moses, who *conversed with him face to face, as a man with his friend;* of David, the man after God's own heart; and of the many thousands that entered the gates of heaven, before Jesus left it to make his appearance in our world. And did they obtain salvation by a Redeemer so little known, and shall any of us perish, when he is so clearly revealed to us, and so explicitly proposed to our acceptance? God forbid! Whatever became of sinners in Canaan, or Greece, or Rome, where they had prophets or philosophers, but no Jesus to shew them the path of life; O! let sinners in Hanover press into the kingdom of heaven. For shame, let them seek salvation, lest Jews and Heathens, and all the world, rise up in judgment against them.—But I observed from the text,

III. That good men earnestly desire clear discoveries of Christ and his gospel.

This was not peculiar to Abraham and the Old Testament saints, but it is common to all good men in all ages and countries: and if you belong to their number, this is your disposition. O! how you long to know more of Jesus, and dive deeper into the mysteries of his gospel! How are you mortified and grieved for your ignorance! And how sweet is every beam of heavenly light, that breaks in upon your minds, and discovers more of the glory of Christ to you, and the wonders of his gospel! This was your end (was it not?) in coming hither to-day; and for this end you intend to sit down at his table, even that you may see

the Lord Jesus in an advantageous point of view by faith, and be more charmed with his glories! Is not this what you desire and long for! Well, for your comfort, I can assure you,

IV. That these desires shall be accomplished.

Abraham desired to see Christ's day, and he saw it; his desires were fulfilled. And he was not the only one to whom divine veracity performed its promise, and divine goodness bestowed its bounties. No, the same blessing has been conferred upon every soul, in every age and country, that, like him, earnestly desired Jesus Christ. This desire pre-supposes a deep sense of our guilt and depravity, and of our inability to make atonement for our sin, or to sanctify our nature, and prepare ourselves for heaven, that region of perfect holiness: and it also implies a general conviction of the glory and excellency of Jesus Christ, and his suitableness to our case. Desires proceeding from such a sense of conviction, are lively and operative, and will set us in action to obtain the thing desired. They are not lazy inactive desires, which persons profess, and yet remain all the day idle, and never exert their utmost strength in earnest endeavours to obtain an interest in Christ, as their supreme good and highest happiness. Such active desires are connected with the promises of eternal veracity, which almighty power will certainly perform. Therefore, fear not, ye that seek Jesus who was crucified. You shall not always pine away with hungry eager desires and pantings for him, but your utmost wishes shall be accomplished in the enjoyment of the good you desire. And if ever you have had any experience in this case, I need hardly tell you,

V. That the accomplishment of these desires affords great joy.

Abraham had his desire of seeing Christ's day fulfilled; and it inspired him with joy: *he saw it, and was glad.* How transporting, to view the glory of God shining in the gospel! to contemplate the love, the grace, and all-sufficient fulness of Jesus; to feel the lively emotions of proper affections towards him, and all those heavenly exercises of mind, which attend the sight

of Jesus Christ in the gospel! What is heaven, but the day of Christ; a brighter day indeed, but enlightened by the same sun that shines in the gospel: *the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* Rev. xxi. 23. Therefore as much as you enjoy of this sacred light, so much of heaven do you enjoy on earth.

And now, to conclude.—You have heard of Jesus Christ, and of the disposition of Abraham, and all good men towards him. But is not this all mystery and unintelligible talk to some of you? You never have experienced any thing like it. And can you expect salvation from a neglected unknown Saviour? Or are you able to save yourselves without him? Alas! both are impossible. Therefore, my brethren, this day admit the conviction of your guilt and danger, be thoroughly convinced of your own unworthiness of salvation by natural means, or the guidance of your own wisdom, pray earnestly for spiritual help from above, in and through a glorious and all-powerful Mediator, and never be easy till you get out of darkness into day.

As for the children of light, let them surround the table of their Lord, and there place themselves under the warm enlivening beams of the Sun of righteousness.

SERMON LIV.

The Law and Gospel.

GAL. iii. 23.

But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

IN such a time of general deadness and security as this, it may really afford me painful perplexity what subject to choose. Now this and now that occurs to my mind, and engages my thoughts to pursue it for a while; but after many fluctuations and perplexities, I have at length fixed upon this text, and determined to open to you the nature of the Law and Gospel, and your concern with each of them: and I have this encouragement, that this may be styled an Apostolic subject, by way of eminence, and is that very doctrine which did such mighty execution among the Jews and Gentiles, and converted thousands to the faith of Christ, upon the first publication of Christianity. The Law and Gospel were the grand topics of St. Paul's preaching, if we may judge of his sermons by his Epistles; for in his Epistles, particularly these to the Romans and Galatians, he insists at large upon these subjects. These may also be properly called the doctrine of the reformation from Popery; for no sooner did that sacred light dawn, than it began immediately to clear up the nature and the difference between the Law and the Gospel, and the condition of mankind as under the one or the other of these constitutions. Luther, in particular, made this the great scope of his preaching and writings; and he wrote an excellent commentary upon this epistle to the Galatians for this very purpose. And who knows but such a subject as this, which has been the ancient weapon for demolishing the kingdom of Satan, and wounding impenitent hearts, may do some execution, through the divine

blessing, even when managed by my unskilful hand? Be the event what it will, in the name of the Lord, I would make the attempt.

I shall be the shorter at present in explaining the text, because the whole of the following discourse will tend to reflect light upon it.

Faith, in my text, and in sundry places in this epistle, seems to have a complex signification: it signifies the object of faith revealed in the gospel, or the method of salvation through faith in the righteousness of Christ; and it also signifies the grace of faith in the soul, or a hearty compliance with this way of salvation, so that this expression, *before faith came*, refers to the time before the doctrine of faith was revealed in the gospel to the Galatians, and before the grace of faith was wrought in their hearts. Here it may be proper to observe, that the members of the primitive church in general, and particularly that in Galatia, were brought under the gospel-dispensation, and embraced the doctrine of the gospel by faith at one and the same time. But they were not, like us, educated under the gospel-dispensation; for part of them had been Jews, educated under the Mosaic dispensation, which, by way of eminence, is frequently called the Law; and, as they were under the legal dispensation, they were generally under the influence of a legal spirit; that is, they sought for justification by their own works of obedience to that law.

Another part of them had been educated Heathens, and were destitute at once of the revelation of the gospel, and of faith in it. Of this sort the generality of the Galatians had been. And yet St. Paul represents them also as having been under the law, not the Jewish or Mosaic law, which the Gentiles had no concern with, but the law of nature, which is universally binding upon all mankind. And as they were under this law, they were also possessed of a legal spirit; that is, they sought salvation by their own obedience to it, as the only way which they knew, and which was natural to them. But, when the gospel-dispensation was set up in the world, and the doctrine of faith preached to them, they immediately believed, and so were freed

from the outward dispensation of the law, and from a legal spirit, at once; and they heard the doctrine, and received the outward dispensation of the gospel, and savingly believed, "at one and the same time." Hence the apostle speaks of their being delivered from the dispensation of the law, and from a legal spirit, and of their being brought under the gospel-dispensation, and cordially believing the gospel-doctrine, in the same language "as one and the same thing:" and what he says is sometimes equally applicable to the outward dispensation and the inward temper denominated from it, and sometimes more pertinent to the one than to the other. So in my text, the time *before faith came*, is applicable to the state of the Galatians, while under the dispensation of the law, and under a legal or self-righteous temper; and while they had neither heard the doctrine of faith, nor received the grace of faith. And when in opposition to this (v. 25.) he observes, *after that faith is come, we are no longer under the law as a schoolmaster;* he means both after the preaching of the gospel, and after it was received by faith. Many more instances of this might be given *.

From hence we may infer, that what St. Paul says concerning the state of those that were under the law, as that *they are in bondage, shut up under sin, under the curse, that the law is their schoolmaster to bring them to Christ*, &c. is not to be confined to the Jews, or to persons in that age, but may, in part at least, be applied to us, though we have been educated under the gospel, and never were under the Jewish law; for we may be possessed of a legal spirit, though we live under the gospel, and never were subject to the Mosaic œconomy. Our observation also is supported from hence, that the apostle represents the Galatians (the main body of whom were Gentiles, and had no more connection with the law of Moses than we) as under the curse of the law, &c. in this sense; and as freed from the law by their faith. Therefore, though the outward dispensation of faith came into our parts of the world before we were born, yet we may apply the text to ourselves, and say, *before faith came;* that is, be-

* Particularly chap. iv. 3, 5. Rom. vii. 1, 7.

fore faith came into our hearts: before the evangelical grace was wrought in us by the power of God, *we were kept under the law;* the original word is very emphatical *, we were prisoners under close confinement, we were held in custody by the law, as by a strong guard, to prevent all escape. *We were shut up to the faith.* Here again the original word is very emphatical †, we were enclosed all round; every way of escape was stopt, but only that of faith: we were shut up to this way: in this way we were obliged to fly, or to continue for ever bound fast under condemnation: *shut up to the faith which should afterwards be revealed.* This also may be accommodated to us, and signify the clear discovery of the gospel to our minds, as an object of faith, by that illumination of the spirit, which is the cause of it. But it is more properly and peculiarly applicable to the Galatians, while as yet the doctrine of faith in the gospel was not revealed to them. They were held in custody by the law till that happy time came, and then, upon their believing the gospel, they were set at liberty.

My present design is to lay down some propositions for the explication of the apostolic doctrine concerning the law and the gospel, that you may see in what sense mankind are kept prisoners by the law, under condemnation, and shut up to the faith; or to the method of justification through the righteousness of Christ, as the only way of escape.

The propositions I would lay down are these:— That all mankind in all ages are under a law to God: That this law was first given to man, in a state of innocence, in the form of a covenant of works, by which he was to obtain happiness: That it has passed through several editions, and received several additions and modifications in different ages: That this law requires perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience: That it is impossible for any of the sons of men to be justified and saved by this constitution: That therefore God has graciously made another constitution, namely, the gospel, by which sinners may be justified and saved

* Εφρουρουμεθα. † Συγκεκλεισμενοι.

through the righteousness of Jesus Christ: That all mankind are under the law, as a covenant of works, till they willingly forsake it, and fly to the gospel for refuge by faith in Christ: And consequently, that they are shut up by the law to this method of salvation, as the only way of escape.

I. "All mankind, in all ages, are under a law to God." This can be denied by none who grant there is such a thing as sin or duty; for where there is no law, there can be no duty or transgression. If murder or blasphemy are universally evil with regard to all mankind, in all ages, it must be because they are forbidden by a law universally and perpetually binding. If the love of God, or justice towards men, be a duty binding upon all mankind, in all ages, it must be because it is enjoined by some law of universal and perpetual obligation. This cannot be disputed with regard to the Jews, the subjects of the Mosaic law, who are said, by way of eminence, to be under the law: And the apostle infers, that those who lived between Adam and Moses were also under a law, from the punishment of death inflicted upon them; for as where there is no law there can be no transgression, so where there is no law there can be no punishment; for punishment is the execution of the penalty of a law upon an offender, for transgressing the precept. Thus St. Paul reasons (Rom. v. 13, 14.) *until the law;* that is, all the time from Adam's fall till the giving of the law at mount Sinai, (about 2536 years) *sin was in the world;* and consequently there was a law then in force: *for sin is not imputed where there is no law.* But sin was evidently imputed in that period; for, though the Sinai law was not then published, *nevertheless death*, the penalty of the law, *reigneth with dreadful uncontrouled power, from Adam to Moses.* Thus you see the patriarchal age was under a law to God. And as to the Gentiles, though they had not the revealed law, yet they were not lawless, but bound by the law of nature; of the contents of which their own reason and conscience informed them in the most important particulars. Thus St. Paul tells us, *that the Gentiles, who have not the revealed law,*

perform by nature the part of a law*, and therefore *are a law to themselves, the works of the law being written in their hearts.* Rom. ii. 14, 15. As to us, who live under the gospel, *we are not,* as the apostle observes, *without law to God, but under the law to Christ* (1 Cor. ix. 21.); that is, we are still under a law to God, with all those endearing obligations superadded, which result from the gracious gospel of Christ. And we cannot suppose the contrary, without supposing that the gospel has put an end to all religion and morality, and set us at liberty to all manner of vice and impiety; for if we are still obliged to religion and virtue, it must be by some constitution that has the general nature of a law. St. Paul rejects the thought with horror, that the law is made void by the gospel. *Do we then make void the law by faith? Far be the thought, nay, we establish the law.* Rom. iii. 31. This first proposition therefore is sufficiently evident, "That all mankind, in all ages, and under every dispensation of religion, are under a law to God." Let us now advance a step farther:

II. This law was first of all given to man in a state of innocence, under the model of a covenant of works; that is, it was the constitution, by obedience to which he was to secure the favour of God, and to obtain everlasting felicity. It was his duty to observe it, with a view to obtain immortality and happiness by it; and these blessings he was to secure by his own works of obedience. That the law was first published to man with this view, is evident from many passages of scripture, particularly from that often-repeated maxim of the apostle, *The man that doth these things shall live by them* (Rom. x. 5. Gal. vii. 12. See also Lev. xviii. 5. Neh. ix. 29. Ezek. xx. 11, 13, 21.): nay, he tells us expressly, *that the commandment was ordained unto life* (Rom. vii. 10.); that is, it was appointed as a plan by which man was to obtain life. Hence Christ assures the lawyer, who had repeated the substance of the law to him, *This do, and thou shalt live.* Luke x. 28. This implies, that if he fully obeyed the law, he

* So I would choose to render φύσει τὰ τῦ νόμυ ποιη; and thus it agrees better with what follows, ἑαυτοῖς εἰσι νόμος.

would certainly obtain life by it, according to the original design of that constitution. And when St. Paul says, That the salvation of sinners was a thing which the law could not do, in that it was *weak through the flesh*, Rom. vii. 3. it is implied, that it was not weak in itself, but fully sufficient to give life; only, by the weakness of our flesh, we were not able to obey it, and on this account it was not able to save us. This proposition also is sufficiently evident, that the law was first given to man in innocence, as a covenant of works, or as a constitution according to which he was to obtain life by his own works. I now proceed to the next proposition, and to shew you,

III. That this law has passed through several editions, and received several additions and modifications, adapted to the various circumstances of mankind, and the designs of heaven towards them.

That you may more fully understand this, I would observe by the way, that the law is either moral or positive. By the moral law, I mean that law which is founded upon the eternal reason of things, and that enjoins those duties which creatures under such and such circumstances owe to God, and to one another, and which necessarily flow from their relation to one another. Thus, love to God, and justice to mankind, are moral duties universally binding upon mankind in all circumstances, whether in a state of innocence, or in a state of sin; whether under the revealed law, or the law of nature. There can be no possible circumstances in which mankind are free from the obligation of such duties, and at liberty to commit the contrary sins. These are most properly the materials of a moral law. But there is another set of duties, agreeable to the circumstances of fallen creatures under a dispensation of grace, which I may call evangelical morals; I mean repentance and reformation, and the utmost solicitude to re-obtain the forfeited favour of our Maker. These are universally binding upon mankind in their present state, and result from their circumstances, and consequently partake of the general nature of a moral law. By a positive law, I mean a law not necessarily resulting from the reason of things, and our relations and circum-

stances, but founded upon the will of the lawgiver, and adapted to some particular occasion. Such was that appendage to the first covenant, "Thou shalt not eat of the tree of knowledge." Such were the institution of sacrifices immediately after the fall, the ordinance of circumcision given to Abraham, and the various ceremonies of the law of Moses; and such are baptism and the Lord's supper, and the institution of the first day of the week for the Christian Sabbath under the gospel. These ordinances are not binding in their own nature, and consequently they are not of universal and perpetual obligation, but they are in force when and where the lawgiver is pleased to appoint. And the moral law, under every dispensation, has had some of these institutions annexed to it; though in the state of innocence, and under the spiritual dispensation of the gospel, they are but few and easy.

I now resume the proposition, "That the law has passed through several editions, and received several additions and modifications." With regard to Adam in his original state, it only required of him the duties naturally binding upon him, and adapted to his condition as an innocent creature, with this one positive precept added, that he should not eat of the tree of knowledge. This was its model while a covenant of works. But when man fell, it received several additions and modifications adapted to his circumstances and subservient to the gospel, the new plan of life, which was immediately introduced, as I shall have occasion to observe more fully hereafter. Such was the early institution of sacrifices, to prefigure the grand atonement of Christ, which then took its rise, and thence spread through all nations, though they soon forgot its original design and evangelical reference. Thus the law continued for many hundreds of years, from Adam's fall to the Deluge*. After the Deluge it was given to Noah, with the institution of sacrifices continued, and the addition of some new laws, particularly the allowance of animal food, with the exception of blood. And it is this addition of the law that was most strictly universal with regard to all mankind, who were the poste-

* About 1656 years. *Universal Hist.* Vol. xx. p. 2.

rity of Noah, the second root of human nature, and who received it from him; though it was soon forgotten, or adulterated with superstitions. After some time*, when the knowledge and worship of the true God was almost lost in the world, he was pleased to separate Abraham from the idolatrous world, to set up his church in his family, and to continue the former edition of the law, with the addition of the sacred rite of circumcision, as a token of initiation into the church, and of the purification of the heart, and as a seal of the righteousness of faith. And this constitution continued in the posterity of Abraham for about 430 years; when it was new-modelled and improved by a more full edition. A summary of the moral law was published with the utmost majesty and terror on mount Sinai, and written by God himself on two tables of stone. But besides this moral law, and besides the positive institutions given to Adam, Noah, and Abraham, God was pleased to add a great variety of positive laws, concerning the manner of sacrificing, and the system of worship concerning ceremonial pollutions, concerning the Jewish policy, or civil government of that people, and many other things: of all which we have a full account in the law of Moses.

This dispensation continued in force from that time for about 1525 years, till the ascension of Christ, and the Day of Pentecost, when the more glorious dispensation of the gospel was introduced. It is often called the Law, by way of eminence; and it is to this most perfect dispensation of the law that the apostle particularly refers, when disproving the possibility of a sinner's justification by the law. And it was to his purpose to have this particularly in view: for if a sinner could not be justified by this edition of the law, which was the most complete; and that in which the Jews peculiarly gloried and trusted, it is evident that he cannot be justified by the law at all, under any form whatsoever. Now, though the gospel, or the covenant of grace, as I shall observe presently, was interwoven with this dispensation, as well as every other, and it was the great

* About 427 years, circumcision was instituted 451 years after the deluge.

design of the law to be subservient to it, yet there was much of a covenant of works in this dispensation, and that in two respects. 1. In the dreadful majesty and terror of the publication from amidst the thunders and lightnings, and darkness of Sinai, which spread such a horror through the whole camp of Israel, and made even Moses confess, *I exceedingly fear and quake.* This had not the aspect of friendship: it did not appear as if God was amicably conversing with an innocent people, and setting up a constitution of mere grace among them. It rather appeared like a dispensation of a provoked God towards a guilty people, intended to strike terror into their impenitent hearts, to make them sensible of his awful majesty and justice, of the terror of his law, and of their aggravated breaches of it. There were indeed gracious designs at the bottom of all this: but they were such designs as could not be accomplished, till sinners were made deeply sensible of their dreadful guilt, and the terrors of God and his holy law, which they had broken; and therefore to accomplish them God puts on all these dreadful forms of wrath. Thus the Sinai dispensation was intended to prepare men for the method of salvation through Christ, by making them sensible of their miserable condition by the breach of the covenant of works; and hence it had so much of the terrible aspect of the covenant of works in its promulgation. This is one thing the apostle means, when he says, *the law worketh wrath*, Rom. iv. 15.; that is, it is adapted to impress a sense of divine wrath upon the minds of the guilty. Hence he calls that dispensation *the ministration of death and condemnation*, 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9.; that is, it had a tendency to excite a sense of death and condemnation; and he makes Hagar, the bondwoman, an allegorical representation of this Sinai covenant, Gal. iv. 24, 25. because it was calculated to excite in sinners a spirit of bondage, or to strike them with a sense of slavery, terror, and condemnation. This view also clears up the meaning of several things which he says of the Jewish law, as that *it was added because of transgression*, Gal. iii. 19.; that is, it was annexed to the covenant of grace, because it was necessary that sinners should be made deeply sensi-

ble of their guilt and condemnation by the breach of the law, in order to their seeking salvation in the way of grace through Christ. And hence, says he, *the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ*, ver. 24.; that is, the painful discipline and smarting rod of the law were necessary and conducive to constrain us to fly to Christ as the only Saviour, without whom we were shut up under irreversible condemnation. And again, Rom. v. 20. *the law entered, that the offence might abound;* that is, that it might appear that the offence had abounded, and overspread the world; and therefore that they stood in the utmost need of a Saviour.

Thus you see the dispensation of the law at Sinai had the appearance of a broken covenant of works, and in this view was subservient to the gospel. But this was not all; for, 2. If we consider that covenant as the constitution of the Jewish church and state, and the model by which they were to govern themselves in the land of Canaan, it was properly a covenant of works. As a visible national church and civil society, God would reward or punish them in temporal things, according to and for their works. While they continued obedient to the external forms and institutions of this law, they were to hold their possessions in the land of Canaan; and when they publicly violated this covenant, they were cast out of their possessions and brought into slavery. These temporal possessions they held upon the footing of a covenant of works; though such of them as were good men were saved by a quite different constitution, even in the way of grace, and faith in Christ, as we are now; as I may have occasion to observe hereafter.

This remark will explain such places in the law and the prophets, where we meet with such declarations as this, *If a man observe my statutes, he shall live in them;* of which you have more instances than one in the xviiith chapter of Ezekiel. They are said to be "just," &c. as members of the Jewish church and state, because they had observed the externals of that law, which was the constitution of their republic, and which in that view only required an external obedience, which it was in their power to yield; and therefore they were

entitled to life and its blessings, in the land of Canaan, according to that constitution. Indeed God seems to have governed not only the Jews, but all the kingdoms of the earth, considering them as civil societies, very much in this manner, upon the footing of a covenant of works. Spiritual and immortal blessings are bestowed upon individuals in every age in a way of grace, without regard to their personal works; and the holiness necessary to the enjoyment of them is not merely outward, but in the whole soul; and it is God only that can work in them. But nations, as such, are under a kind of covenant of works, the condition of which is an external observance of the laws of God, which is in their power, without any special assistance from him; and as they perform or break this condition, temporal rewards and punishments are distributed to them by divine providence. This thought brings me in mind of thee, O Virginia, O my country! for if God deal with thee upon this plan, how dreadful must be thy doom!—But to return. This suggests to us another reason why the apostle so often speaks of the Mosaic law as a covenant of works; namely, because, considering it as the constitution of the Jewish republic in temporal respects, it was really such, but it was never intended that the Jews should seek or obtain spiritual or immortal blessings by it under this notion. I have been so much longer than I expected on this proposition, that I must be the shorter on those that follow. The next proposition is,

IV. That the law of God requires perfect, perpetual, and personal obedience. This holds true with regard to every law of God, whatever it be. If it requires purely moral duties, it requires that they be performed exactly according to its prescriptions. If it requires evangelical duties, as repentance or sincerity, it requires perfect repentance, perfect sincerity. If it requires the observance of any ceremonial or sacramental institutions, as sacrifice, circumcision, baptism, or the Lord's supper, it requires a perfect observance of them. Men have got the notion into their heads of a divine law that does not require perfect obedience, or that makes allowance for imperfection. But this is

bad sense, as well as bad divinity. It is the greatest absurdity imaginable; for to say that a law does not require perfect obedience, is the same thing as to say that it does not require what it does require: to do all that the law requires is perfect obedience: and since it requires us to do all that it does require, it certainly does require perfect obedience; and if it does not require perfect obedience, it does not require all that it does require; which is a direct contradiction. In short, it is plain to common sense that there never was, nor ever can be any law, moral or positive, divine or human, that does not require perfect, absolute obedience. Farther, Is not every sin forbidden? is not every duty enjoined? Undoubtedly it is: you are not at liberty to commit one sin, or to omit one duty, not even the least. Indeed the very notion of sin and duty supposes a law forbidding the one, and enjoining the other; and they are just commensurate with the prohibitions and injunctions of the law. This is also the voice of scripture. That perfect obedience is required, appears from the dreadful curse denounced upon every transgressor for the least offence: *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. Not some subjects, but every one, of every rank and character, must not only resolve or endeavour, but must do, not some things, or many things, but all things, written in the law; not for a time, or for the most part, but he must always continue to do them. And if he fail in one thing, in one moment of his existence, the penalty of the law is in full force against him, and he falls under the curse. His obedience must be universal, perpetual, and uninterrupted. There is the same reason for his obeying all in all things, and at all times, as for his obeying in any thing, or at any time. And all this obedience the law requires of him in his own person: the law allows of no imputation of the righteousness of another; no obedience by proxy or substitute: it is the covenant of grace alone that allows of this, and the law must be so far dispensed with, in order to make room for such a constitution.

This, my brethren, is the nature of the law, of every

law that God ever made, under every dispensation of religion, before the fall and after the fall, before the law of Moses, under it, and under the gospel. In all ages, in all circumstances, and from all persons it requires perfect, perpetual, and personal obedience: to the performance of this, it promises eternal life: but the sinner, by every the least failure, falls under its dreadful curse, and is cut off from all the promised blessings. And hence it most evidently follows,

V. That it is absolutely impossible for any of the fallen sons of men to be justified and saved by the constitution of the law. Take what dispensation of the law you please, the law of innocence, the law of Moses, or the moral part of the gospel, it is impossible for one of the fallen posterity of Adam to be saved by it in any of these views; and the reason is plain, there is not one of them but what has broken it; there is not one of them that has yielded perfect obedience to it; and, therefore, there is not one of them but what is condemned by it to suffer its dreadful penalty. This is so extremely plain from what has been said, that I need not insist upon the proof of it. I shall only subjoin the repeated declaration of the apostle, that *by the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified,* Rom. iii. 20. Gal. ii. 16. and that *as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse,* Gal. iii. 10. Come, *ye that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?* Gal. iv. 2. Hark! how the thunders of Sinai roar against you as guilty sinners. Can you pretend that you have always perfectly obeyed the law? that you have never committed one sin, or neglected one duty? Alas! you must hang down the head, and cry Guilty, guilty; for in many things you have all offended. Then, be it known unto you, there is no life by the law for you. Set about obedience with ever so much earnestness; repent till you shed rivers of tears; fast, till you have reduced yourselves to skeletons; alas! all this will not do, if you expect life by your own obedience to the law: for all this is not that perfect obedience which it absolutely requires of all the sons of men; and whatever is short of this is nothing, and leaves you under its curse. You may make excuses to men,

and to your own consciences, but the law will admit of none. Perfect obedience! perfect obedience! is its eternal cry; and till you can produce that, it condemns you to everlasting misery, and all your cries, and tears, and reformation, are to no purpose. Thus you are held in close custody by the law; you are shut up under condemnation by it. And is there no way of escape? No; there is no possible way of escape—but one: and that shall be the matter of the next proposition.

VI. That God has made another constitution, namely, the gospel, or the covenant of grace, by which even guilty sinners, condemned by the law, may be justified and saved by faith, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

According to this constitution there is encouragement for sinners to repent, and use the means of grace; and all who are saved by it, are not only obliged to yield obedience to the law, but also enabled to do so with sincerity, though not to perfection. They are effectually taught by it *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world;* and, in short, holiness of heart and life is as effectually secured in this way as in any other. But then, here lies the difference: that all our obedience to the law, all our endeavours, all our repentance, prayers, and reformation; in short, all our good works, all our virtues and graces, are not at all the ground of our justification; they do not, in whole or in part, more or less constitute our justifying righteousness; so that in justification we are considered as guilty, law-condemned sinners, entirely destitute of all personal righteousness; and we are pardoned and accepted, only and entirely upon account of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, imputed to us, and accepted of God for us, as though it were our own. I say, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, or his yielding the most perfect obedience to the precept of the law, and suffering its dreadful penalty for us, or in our stead, is the only ground of our justification. This is a righteousness as perfect as the law of God requires. And consequently the law is not repealed, when we are justi-

fied in this way; it is still in full force; and all its demands are answered by this righteousness, which is equal to the severest requisitions of the covenant of works; only it is dispensed with in one particular; namely, that whereas the law properly requires personal obedience from every man for himself, now it accepts of the obedience of Christ as a surety in our stead, and is satisfied by his righteousness imputed to us, as though it were originally our own. But how do we obtain an interest in this righteousness? I answer, It is only obtained by a vigorous pursuit, and in the earnest use of the means of grace; but then, all these endeavours of ours do not in the least intitle us to it, or it is not at all bestowed upon us on account of these endeavours; but the grand prerequiste, and that which has a peculiar concurrence in obtaining it, is an humble faith; that is, when a sinner, deeply sensible of his guilt, of his condemnation by the law, and of his own utter inability to do any thing at all for his own justification; I say, when such an humble sinner, despairing of relief from himself, renounces all his own righteousness, and trusts only and entirely in the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, when he places all his dependence upon his righteousness only, and most earnestly desires that God would deal with him entirely upon that footing, then he believes; and then, and thus, this righteousness is made over to him, and accepted for him, and God no more views him as a law-condemned sinner, but as one that has a righteousness equal to all the demands of the law, and therefore he deals with him accordingly: he pronounces him just, and gives him a title to life and every blessing, as though he deserved it upon his own account, or had a claim to it upon the footing of his own obedience to the covenant of works.

My brethren, I am bold to pronounce this the gospel-method of salvation; and, whatever scepticism and uncertainty I feel about many other things, I have not the least scruple to venture my soul, with all its guilt, and with all its immortal interest upon this plan. If I have thoroughly searched the scriptures for myself in any one point, it is in this. And could I but lay

before you all the evidence which has occurred to me in the search, I cannot but persuade myself it would be fully satisfactory to you all; but at present I can only point out to you a few passages: Acts xiii. 39. *By Jesus Christ*, says St. Paul, *all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses*, which was the most complete dispensation of the law. Rom. iii. 21—28. *Now the righteousness of God without the law* (that is, the righteousness which does not at all consist in the works of the law, but is quite a different thing from it*) *is manifested—even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Christ.* This, you see, is the way in which it comes *unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference* of Jew or Gentile here; all *being freely justified by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ.* Therefore we conclude, that *a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law:* so Rom. iv. *To him that worketh*, and on that account is considered as righteous, *the reward is reckoned not of grace, but of debt:* he is not at all dealt with in the gospel-method, which is entirely a plan of grace (ver. 4.); *but to him that worketh not*, with a view to his justification, and is not considered as entitled to it upon the account of his works, *but believeth*, humbly trusteth, and dependeth *upon him that justifieth the ungodly*, upon him who considers the sinner, whatever previous endeavours he may have used, as ungodly, and destitute of all personal righteousness, to such an humble believer, *his faith is counted for righteousness.* (ver. 5.) *Even as David describeth the blessedness of that man, to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works*, &c. (ver. 6.) Gal. ii. 15. *We*, says St. Paul, *who are Jews by nature* (and therefore stand most fair for justification by the law, if it were possible) *and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* (ver. 16.)

* χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσυνη.

These, my brethren, are but specimens of the many plain and express scriptures that support this doctrine; and I think it plain, upon the whole, that if we can understand any thing contained in that sacred book, we may safely conclude that this truth is contained in it.

Here I would hint, what I intended to enlarge upon, had the time allowed, that this is the only way in which any of the sons of Adam have been saved since the fall; and that this gracious scheme has run through all the dispensations of religion, from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to Christ; and that now, by the gospel, it is more fully and illustriously revealed, the object of a more distinct, particular, and explicit faith. Rom. i. 17. It was first published immediately after the first breach of the covenant of works, in that gracious promise, *The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head.* Gen. iii. 15. It was communicated to Abraham in that promise. *In thy seed;* that is, as St. Paul teaches us to understand it, *in Christ,* who shall spring from thee according to the flesh, *shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* Gen. xxii. 18. Gal. iii. 16. Hence St. Paul tells us, that the scripture, *foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through faith, preached the gospel before-hand to Abraham.* Gal. iii. 8. This was, as it were, the substratum of all the ceremonies and institutions of the law of Moses; and, as was observed, the whole of this law, and the solemn and dreadful manner of its publication, were intended to subserve this scheme, by making men sensible of their need of it, and constraining them to fly to it for refuge. The prophets also received this evangelical light, and continued to diffuse it around them, till the Sun of Righteousness arose. But all these discoveries were but dark, when compared to the clearer revelation we have of it in the New Testament, particularly in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians, which designedly treat upon it. However, they that lived under former dispensations, had light enough to direct them to place their trust in the mercy of God, and to look out with eager eyes for the Messiah, through whom

alone they were justified, though they might not have distinct ideas of the way. Hence Abraham and David are mentioned by St. Paul as instances of the gospel-method of Justification by faith in Christ. Rom. iv. 1—7. I now proceed to another proposition.

VII. That all mankind are under the law, as a covenant of works, till they willingly forsake it, and fly to the gospel for refuge by faith in Christ.

There are but two constitutions that God has set up in our world, by which mankind can obtain life, namely, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, or the law and gospel: and all mankind are under the one, or the other. They are all either under the constitution which demands perfect obedience as the only title to life, and threatens death, eternal death, to the least failure; or under that which does indeed both require and enable them to yield sincere obedience, but does not insist upon our obedience at all as the ground of our acceptance and justification, but confers that honour entirely upon the complete righteousness of Jesus Christ, received by the humble faith of a guilty, self-condemned, helpless, broken-hearted sinner. We are all of us, my brethren, under one or other of these constitutions; for to be from under both of them is the same thing as to be lawless, and to be under no plan of life at all. Now, we are under the law while we are under the government of a legal spirit; and we cannot be freed from it till we are brought off from all dependence upon the law, and constrained to choose the gospel-method of salvation as helpless, law-condemned sinners by our own personal act. We live under the gospel-dispensation indeed, and were never under the law of Moses: and yet we may be under the law notwithstanding, as the Romans and Galatians were till they were set free by faith, though they had been heathens, and were never under the Mosaic dispensation. An outward dispensation is not the thing that makes the difference in this case. Many who lived under the dispensation of the law had an evangelical spirit, or faith in Christ, and therefore they were upon the gospel-plan, and obtained salvation in the way of grace. And multitudes that live in the New Testament

age, under the gospel administration of the covenant of grace, and who profess the christian religion, and were never subject to the law of Moses, are under the influence of a legal, self-righteous spirit, and therefore are not under grace, but under the law as a covenant of works: upon this footing they stand before God, and they can enter no claim to life upon any other plan. As for the righteousnes of Christ, and the grace of the gospel, they have nothing to do with it, because they have not chosen it, and made it theirs by their own personal act.

And would you know whether you are set free from the law, and placed under the covenant of grace? St. Paul, who knew it, both by his own experience and by inspiration from heaven, will inform you, (1) You have been made deeply sensible of sin and condemnation by the law. *By the law is the knowledge of sin.* Rom. iii. 20. I had not known sin *but by the law*, says St. Paul, personating a convinced sinner under the law, *without the law*, Rom. viii. 7.; that is, while I was ignorant of the extent and spirituality of the law, *sin was dead*, as to my sense and apprehension of it; *but when the commandment came*, with power and conviction to my conscience, *sin revived, and I died;* that is, I saw sin to be alive in me, and myself to be dead, dead in trespasses and sins, and condemned to death, by the law, verse 9.; *the law also worketh wrath;* that is, a sense of the wrath of God, and the dreadful punishment of sin; Rom. iv. 14. And has the law ever had these effects upon you, my brethren? Have you ever had such a conviction of sin, and condemnation by it? If not, you are still under it. (2.) If you have been delivered from the law, you have been cut off from all hopes of obtaining justification by your own obedience to it; you have given up this point as altogether desperate; or in the strong language of the apostle, you have been slain by the law. *When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* Rom. viii. 9. *My brethren*, says the apostle to the christians at Rome, *ye are become dead to the law*, verse 4.; that is, ye are become dead to all endeavours, all hopes and desires of justification by the works of the law; you

see nothing but death for you in that constitution. And he tells you how this death was brought about; *I through the law am dead to the law*, Gal. ii. 19.; that is, the law itself became the executioner of all my hopes of life by it, and for ever put an end to all my endeavours to seek justification in that way: it was a view of the extensive demands of the law that discovered to me my own inability to comply with them, and so deadened me intirely to all expectations of life by my obedience to it.

And have you ever, my brethren, been thus slain by the law to the law? Have you ever been made deeply sensible of the absolute impossibility of working out a justifying righteousness for yourselves by your own endeavours, and thereupon given up the point, as hopeless and desperate? If not, you are still under the law, and your hearts eagerly cling to it, and will not be divorced from it. Here you will hold and hang, till you drop into the bottomless pit, unless God deliver you from this legal spirit.

(3.) If you have been set at liberty from the law, and brought under the covenant of grace, you have believed in Christ, and fled to the gospel, as the only way of escape from the bondage and condemnation of the law. It is the uniform doctrine of the apostle, that it is by faith only that this happy change is brought about in our condition. *We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.* Gal. ii. 16. But after faith is come, we are set at liberty and no longer under the law, *as a schoolmaster.* Gal. iv. 25. *Righteousness shall be imputed to us also, if we believe in him that raised up our Lord Jesus from the dead.* Rom. iv. 24. Faith, you see, is the turning point. And so it is represented by Christ himself. *He that believeth in Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already,* John iii. 18.: he has sinned, and therefore the sentence of condemnation is already passed upon him by the law. And have you, my brethren, ever been brought thus to believe? Have you found yourselves shut up to the faith, as the only way of escape? and have you fled to the mercy

of God in Christ in that way, with all the vigour of your souls?

(4.) If you are under the covenant of grace, then you are not willing slaves to sin, but make it your great business to live to God. This is represented as the privilege and constant endeavour of all that are delivered from the law. *Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law,* which requires obedience, but furnishes no strength to perform it, *but under grace,* which will enable you to resist sin, and live to God. Rom. vi. 14. *Ye are dead to the law, that ye might be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that you might bring forth fruit unto God:* This is the great design of your divorce from the law, and your marriage to Christ; Rom. vii. 4. *I through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.* Gal. ii. 19. And do you thus live to God, sirs? Is this the great business, and constant endeavour of your whole life? If not, you are not under grace, but under the law, the Ægyptian task-master, who demands perfect obedience, but gives no ability to perform it; and now, you that are under the law, take a serious view of your condition. *They that are of faith are blessed,* Gal. vi. 9.; but faith has never entered your hearts, and therefore you have nothing to do with the blessing. But you may read your doom in the next verse: *As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse* (verse 10.); for, *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.* Thus you lie under the ministration of death and condemnation, and you can never get free from its curse till you can perform impossibilities; till you can annihilate all your past sins, till you can transform your sinful life into an uninterrupted course of perfect obedience. Do this, and you shall live, even according to that constitution under which you are. But till you can do this, till you can yield perfect, perpetual obedience, in your own persons, you can never get free from the curse, or obtain life, while you affect this way of justification. I tell you again, all your prayers and tears, all your repentance and reformation; in short,

every thing that comes short of perfect obedience, will avail you nothing at all upon this constitution: they are but fig-leaves that cannot hide your nakedness. And do not imagine that the righteousness of Christ will supply your defects, and procure you acceptance; for his righteousness belongs only to the covenant of grace, and is imputed only to such as have received it by faith; but, while you are under the law, you have nothing to do with it. St. Paul himself will tell you, *Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you would be justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace,* Gal. v. 4.; you stand entirely on your own bottom; and God will deal with you just as he finds you in yourselves, without any relation to Christ at all.

And now, my dear brethren, do you not begin to find yourselves pinched closely, and in a sore strait? Do you not feel yourselves imprisoned and shut up under the law? And are not you casting about, and looking out for some way of escape? Well, I will shew you the only way left, and that is by faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The gospel! the gospel! O that my voice could publish the joyful sound in every corner of this globe inhabited by guilty sinners! The gospel of grace is the only relief for you. Fly thither, ye helpless, law-condemned, self-condemned sinners; fly thither, and you are safe. As depraved and guilty, as ungodly and destitute of all righteousness, accept of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Cast all your dependence upon it, and make it the only ground of all your hopes. Regard the law always as a rule of life, and labour to form your practice upon that sacred model; but as a covenant of works, by which you should obtain life, fly from it, abandon it, give up all your hopes and expectations from it; and betake yourselves to the covenant of grace, of pure, free, unmingled grace, without the least ingredient of merit. In this way, I offer you pardon, justification, and eternal salvation; and such of you as have chosen this way may be assured of these blessings, notwithstanding all your sins and imperfections. O! that this representation of your condition may recommend Jesus Christ and his righteousness to you! O! that it

may effectually draw off sinners from all their vain, self-righteous schemes, which, like cobwebs, they would form out of their own bowels, and constrain them to stoop and submit to the righteousness of God, and the method of grace! If, after all, they refuse, they will leave this house condemned and under the curse. But such of you as comply, like the penitent publican, you will return to your own house justified, however guilty you came here this morning. I shall conclude with a stanza or two from that evangelical writer, Dr. Watts.

Go, ye that rest upon the law,
And toil, and seek salvation there;
Look to the flames that Moses saw,
And shrink, and tremble, and despair:

But I'll retire beneath the Cross:
Jesus, at thy dear feet I lie;
And the keen sword that justice draws,
Flaming and red, shall pass me by.

SERMON LV.

The Gospel-Invitation. A Sacramental Discourse.

LUKE xiv. 21—24.

Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men that were bidden, shall taste of my supper.

SO vast and various are the blessings proposed to our acceptance in the gospel, that they can never be fully represented, though the utmost force of language be exhausted for that purpose in the sacred writings. Among other lively images, this is one in my context, where the gospel is compared to a feast, a marriage-feast, of royal magnificence. The propriety and significancy of this representation are obvious at first sight; for what is more rich and elegant, and what more agreeable to mankind, than such an entertainment!

Though it is my principal design to consider this parable in its general secondary sense, as applicable to the evangelized world, yet I shall hint a few words upon its particular primary sense, as immediately applicable to the Jews at the time when it was spoken.

Jesus was ready to improve every occurrence for profitable conversation: and when one of the guests made this remark, *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*, or in the reign of the Messiah; he takes occasion to let him and the rest of the company know, that the kingdom of God under the Messiah would not be so acceptable to the world, particularly to the Jews, as might be expected; but that they

would generally reject it, though they pretended so eagerly to expect and desire it.

He said unto him, A certain man made a great supper; that is, the great God has made rich provisions through Jesus Christ of all blessings necessary for the complete salvation and happiness of a guilty world: *and He bade many*; that is, he invited the whole nation of the Jews to a participation of these blessings, when they should be revealed; invited them beforehand, by Moses and the prophets, and by John the Baptist. *And he sent his servant at supper-time;* that is, he sent Christ and his apostles, when the gospel-dispensation was introduced, and those blessings fully revealed, *to say to them that were bidden,* that is, to the Jews, who had been invited by his former messengers; alluding to the custom of those times, when, besides the general invitation to nuptial entertainments given some time before, it was usual to send a particular invitation when the feast was ready, and the attendance of the guests was immediately expected! *Come, for all things are now ready.* Embrace the long expected Messiah, who has now made his appearance among you, and accept the blessings he offers you now, when they are fully revealed.—*But they all, with one consent, began to make excuse;* that is, the Jews in general rejected the Messiah, and the blessings he proposed to their acceptance. The true reason was, their natural aversion to one that taught so holy a religion, and proposed only a spiritual deliverance. But they cover over their conduct with plausible excuses; as if the guests invited to a banquet should say, *I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it:* or, *I have bought five yoke of oxen, and go to prove them:* or, *I have married a wife, and cannot come; therefore pray excuse me.* These excuses, you see, are all drawn from the affairs of this life; which perhaps was intended to intimate, that the pleasures and cares of this world are the reason why the Jews and sinners in all ages reject the invitations of the gospel. It is also observable, that the excuses here made are very trifling, and not plausible. What necessity for viewing a piece of ground, or

proving oxen, after the purchase? That ought to have been done before the purchase. Could a man's being newly married be a reason against his going with his bride to a place of feasting and pleasure? No, these excuses are silly and impertinent; and Christ may have represented them in this light, on purpose to intimate, that all the objections and excuses which sinners plead for their non-compliance with the gospel, are trifling, and not so much as plausible.

Then the master of the house being angry; that is, "the great God resenting the obstinate infidelity of the Jews, and determining to reject them for it, said to his servant;" that is, gave the commission to his apostles, *Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city*, where beggars sit to ask charity, *and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.* Perhaps this may refer to the sending of the gospel to the Jews that were dispersed in heathen countries and their proselytes, when their countrymen in the Holy Land had rejected it. They were not in the highways and hedges, like the poor Gentiles, nor yet settled in the houses in Jerusalem, but are very properly represented as beggars in the streets and alleys of the city; not in such abandoned circumstances as the Gentiles, nor yet so advantageously situated as the Jews in their own land, under the immediate ministry of the apostles. The first invitation is represented as given to persons of fashion, to intimate the superior advantages of the Jews resident in Judea, to whom the gospel was first preached. And those dispersed among the Gentiles are represented as lying in the streets and lanes, as poor, maimed, halt, and blind beggars, to signify their miserable condition in common with all mankind, without the blessings of the gospel; and their disadvantageous situation, compared with the Jews in and about Jerusalem. Or perhaps sending the invitation to those poor creatures, when they first had rejected it, may signify the first preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, upon the Jews rejecting it. And then the servant being ordered to go out again, not into the streets and lanes of the city, as before, but into the highways and hedges, may signify

the farther preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles, who were far off from the church, the city of God, and, like poor country-beggars, lying as outcasts upon the public roads. But if we understand the former passage in the first sense, as signifying the publication of the gospel to the Jews dispersed among the Gentiles, and to their proselytes, then this second mission of the servant must signify the sending of the gospel for the first time to the Gentiles, after both the Jews resident in their own country, and those scattered in other nations had rejected it. The parable concludes with a terrible denunciation against those who had refused the invitation: *None of those men that were bidden, shall taste of my supper;* that is, "The infidel Jews, though first invited, shall never enjoy the blessings of the gospel; but my church shall be furnished with members from among the poor outcast heathens, rather than such should continue in it.

These things must suffice to shew you the primary meaning of this parable, as applicable to the Jews of that age; and the reception of the Gentiles into the church in their stead. But I intend to consider it in a more extensive sense, as applicable to us in these latter times.

Before I enter upon the consideration of this passage, it is necessary I should clear up an enquiry or two, which may reflect light upon the whole.

What are those blessings of the gospel which are here represented by a marriage-feast? And, What is meant by the duty here represented by a compliance with an invitation to such a feast?

The blessings here represented by a marriage-feast are infinitely rich and numerous. Pardon of sin; a free and full pardon for thousands, millions of the most aggravated sins: the influences of the Holy Spirit to sanctify our depraved natures, to subdue our sins, and implant and cherish in our hearts every grace and virtue; freedom from the tyranny of sin and Satan, and favourable access to the blessed God, and sweet communion with him, through Jesus Christ, even in this world: the reviving communications of divine love, to sweeten the afflictions of life; and the constant assist-

ance of divine grace to bear us up under every burden, and to enable us to persevere in the midst of many temptations to apostacy; deliverance from hell, and all the consequences of sin; and a title to heaven, and all its inconceivable joys: in short, complete salvation in due time, and everlasting happiness, equal to the largest capacities of our nature. This is a short view of the blessings of the gospel. But the riches of Christ are unsearchable; and human language can never represent them fully to view. But from the little that we know of them, do they not appear perfectly suited to our necessities; and such as we would ask of God, should he give us leave to ask what we please?

These blessings are represented to us in a striking and sensible manner in the Lord's Supper; and hence you see with what propriety it is called a feast. It is a rich entertainment for hungry souls; and the blessings which it signifies, and the conveyance of which it seals to believers, satisfy the most eager desires, and fully support and cherish the spiritual life. This indeed is not the feast primarily intended in this parable; for the Lord's Supper was not instituted when this parable was spoken; yet most of the things contained in it may very properly be accommodated to this ordinance.

You see the feast to which we are invited, namely, the rich blessings of the gospel. And now, let us enquire, What is meant by the duty here represented by a compliance with an invitation to a marriage-feast?

It supposes a deep affecting sense of our want of these blessings, and of our perishing condition without them: it supposes eager desires after them, and vigorous endeavours to obtain them; it supposes a willingness to abandon every thing inconsistent with them; and it implies a cordial willingness to accept of them as they were offered; for to pretend to be willing to receive them, and yet refuse the terms upon which they are offered, is the greatest absurdity. And how are they offered? They are offered freely; and therefore freely we must receive them, if we receive them at all. We must not offer our own imaginary merit to purchase them; but take them as free gifts to us, purchased entirely by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. They are offered con-

junctly; that is, in an inseparable conjunction with one another. Pardon and sanctifying grace, holiness and happiness, deliverance from the power, the pleasures, and the profits of sin, as well as from hell and the punishments of sin, the cross and the crown, self-denial and the most noble self-possession, are proposed to our choice in conjunction, and they cannot be separated; and therefore, in conjunction we must receive them, or not at all: we must receive them all or none. To accept the pardon, and reject sanctifying grace; to accept the rewards, and refuse the work of holiness; to accept deliverance from the punishment of sin, and yet refuse deliverance from sin itself, as though it were a painful confinement, or bereavement; to accept of Christ as our Saviour, and reject him as our Ruler, this is the wildest absurdity, and an absolute impossibility. To pretend to accept God's offer, and in the mean time to make our own terms, is to insult and mock him. What God and the nature of things have joined, let not man put asunder.

Hence you may see, that the duty represented by complying with an invitation to a marriage-feast in this parable, implies our embracing the gospel as true, which is opposed to the unbelief of the Jews; our accepting the blessings of the gospel freely, as the gracious gift of God for the sake of Christ, renouncing all our own imaginary merit; and our voluntary dedication of ourselves to the service of God, or consenting to be holy in heart and in all manner of conversation. Whoever complies with the invitations of the gospel in this manner, shall be admitted to the marriage-supper of the Lamb at the consummation of all things, and be happy for ever.

Now, I hope, you will know what I mean, when, in the progress of this discourse, I shall exhort you, in the language of my text, to come in to this feast, or to comply with the invitation: I mean, that you should freely and heartily accept of the blessings of the gospel, as they are offered to you by the blessed God, who alone has a right to appoint the terms.

After these preliminaries, I proceed to the immediate consideration of my text,

The first thing that occurs, is a lively representation of the wretched state of mankind, previous to their being enriched with the blessings of the gospel. They are *poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind*, lying as beggars and outcasts in the streets and lanes of the city, and by the highways and hedges in the country. What can represent a more pitiable condition, with regard to this world! To be poor, maimed, halt, and blind in a palace, in the midst of all the necessaries and comforts of life, is a most melancholy situation; but to be poor, maimed, halt, and blind, in the streets and lanes, or scattered about in the highways and hedges, as forlorn outcasts, without any covering but the inclement sky, without any bed but the cold ground, without any sustenance but the charity of passengers; this is the most melancholy situation that can be imagined: and this is the situation in which all mankind are represented, with regard to the eternal world, by one that perfectly knew their case, and who could not but give the most impartial account of it. This is your condition, my brethren, till you accept the rich blessings of the gospel. You are poor, poor as the most helpless beggar on the highway; destitute of pardon, destitute of all real goodness in the sight of God, whatever splendid appearance of virtue you may have in the sight of men; destitute of all qualifications for heaven, as well as of a title to it; destitute of all happiness suited to the spiritual nature, immortal duration, and large capacities of your souls; destitute of the favour of God, which is better than life, and without which life itself will be a curse; destitute of an interest in the righteousness and intercession of Christ the only Saviour of sinners; destitute of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, who alone can make you truly holy. And what a poor destitute condition is this! You are maimed and defective, in a moral sense; defective in those graces and virtues which are essential members of the new man. Your souls are incomplete unfinished things. Your understandings without divine knowledge; your wills without a divine bias towards God and holiness; your affections without a proper tendency towards suitable

objects: and these are as monstrous defects in a moral sense, as a body without limbs, or a head without eyes in a natural sense. You are halt or lame; without power of spiritual motion, or tendency towards it; without strength or inclination to walk in the ways of God's commandments. You are blind as to spiritual and eternal things; that is, ignorant of the glory of God, and the excellency of Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation through him; ignorant of the evil and deformity of sin; and blind to the beauties of holiness. You may indeed have fine speculative notions about these things; but your notions are faint and unaffecting, and have no proper influence upon your heart and practice, and therefore as to all the useful and practical purposes of knowledge, you are stupidly blind and ignorant. O! what an affecting miserable situation is this! and what renders it still the worse, is, that you are not sensible of it. The poor, blind, impotent beggar in the streets, or on the high road, is sensible of his condition, longs for deliverance, and begs and cries for relief from day to day. But alas! you are *rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing* in your own imagination; when you are *wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* And hence you are so far from crying importunately for relief, like blind Bartimeus by the way-side, *Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!* that you will not accept relief when it is freely offered to you.

And are not you very unlikely guests to furnish out a nuptial feast? May not the great God justly leave you out in the invitation of the gospel, and refuse you the offer of its invaluable blessings? But O! the astonishing condescension and grace! to you is the word of salvation sent. Hear the commission first given to the apostles, and still continued to ministers of the gospel of a lower rank, *Go out—go out quickly,* the case is too dangerous to admit of delay. Without immediate provision, the poor outcasts will perish, therefore make haste to find them out whereever they lie, and think it no hardship or indignity to you to go to the meanest places in quest of them. Go through the streets and alleys of the city, and search the hedges

and highways in the country; *and bring them in*; urge them to come; insist upon their compliance; take no denial. Bring them in hither—hither, into the arms of my favour;—hither, into my church, the grand apartment appointed for the celebration of this magnificent entertainment;—hither, into the society of the most honourable guests, and into a participation of the richest blessings. Bring them in hither, poor, and blind, and lame, and halt, and maimed, as they are. They are all welcome. *Him that cometh unto me*, though clothed in rags, and destitute of all things, *I will in nowise cast out.*

To discharge this benevolent commission, I appear among you this day; and shall I find none among you that will comply with the invitation? Where are the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind? In quest of you I am sent; and I am ordered to bring you in. And will ye refuse? Come, ye poor! accept the unsearchable riches of Christ. Come, ye blind! admit the healing light of the Sun of righteousness. Ye halt and maimed! submit yourselves to Him, who, as a Physician, can heal what is disordered, and as a Creator, can add what is wanting. Come, ye hungry starving souls! come to this feast of fat things; that is (to speak without a metaphor) accept the blessings of the gospel now freely offered to you. *Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and him that hath no money, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price.* Will ye rather sit still in the streets and hedges than be guests at this divine feast? Will ye refuse the invitation, when without these blessings you must famish for ever?

However, if ye refuse, I hope I shall be able to make my report to my Master, like the servant in my text; *Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded.* "Lord, I have published thy gracious invitations, and persuaded them, in the best manner I could to come in; and if they still refuse, themselves must be accountable for it, and bear the consequence."

But I must indulge the pleasing hope, that some of you will this day accept this gracious invitation; and such of you may be sure you shall be admitted.

Nay, if all this assembly should unanimously consent, they would find the blessings of the gospel more than sufficient to supply all their wants. For after the servant had brought in a numerous company of guests, from the streets and lanes, he tells his Lord, *yet there is room:* there is room for many more guests. There are many seats still vacant; the room is large, and will contain many more; and the provision is sufficient, more than sufficient, for thousands, for millions more. Yes, my dear brethren, be not discouraged from coming, as if there was no room left for you. The virtue of that blood which streamed upon mount Calvary about 1700 years ago, which has washed away many millions of sins, from the fall of Adam to this day, through the space of near 6000 years; I say the virtue of that blood is still as powerful and sufficient as ever, as powerful and sufficient as when it first flowed warm from the wounded veins of the blessed Jesus. *The mercy of God endureth for ever.* It is an inexhaustible ocean, sufficient to overwhelm and drown a world of the most mountainous sins, and supply the most numerous and desperate necessities. The church of Christ is sufficiently large for the reception of all the inhabitants of the earth, and it is a growing structure, which never will be complete, till all nations are incorporated in it as living stones. In heaven are many mansions, prepared for the reception of many guests to the marriage-supper of the Lamb; and many of them are as yet empty; and may they be filled up by multitudes from this place! There, I hope, are seats provided for some of you, who are now *strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, and from the covenant of promise.* I do not mean that you can be admitted there in your present condition: neither you nor I have any reason to hope for this; but I hope that divine grace may yet prepare you for those mansions of purity and glory. This hope gives a new spring to my endeavours, and therefore I invite the worst of you, the most impenitent and audacious, the most profligate and debauched among you, to come in. Come, O my guilty brethren! Come, publicans and sinners, drunkards, harlots, and thieves; come, sinners of the vilest

characters, *repent and believe the gospel,* you shall be admitted to this celestial feast. O! must it not break the heart of the hardiest sinner among you, to hear, that, after all your aggravated and long-continued provocations, and notwithstanding your enormous guilt, that great God whom you have offended, though he stands in no need of you, and might easily glorify himself by inflicting righteous punishment upon you, yet, is ready to wash away all your sins in the blood of his own Son, and to bestow upon you all the immortal blessings of his favour? O! is there a heart among you proof against such a melting consideration as this? Then all the principles of generosity and gratitude are lost and extinct within you!

I proclaim to all in this assembly this day, *all things are now ready; come unto the marriage.* And why should you not all comply? why should any of you exclude yourselves? Let every one resolve for himself, "for my part, I will not make myself that shocking "exception." How do you know, but this resolution is now forming in the person that sits or stands next you? And shall you be left behind? Will you, as it were, shut the door of heaven against yourselves with your own hand? I once more assure you, there is yet room, room for you all. There are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the patriarchs, and *yet there is room.* There are many from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south, and *yet there is room.* There are persecuting Manasseh, and Paul; there are Mary Magdalene the demoniac, and Zaccheus the publican, and *yet there is room.* There is the once incestuous and excommunicated, but afterwards penitent Corinthian; nay, there are several of the Corinthians, who, as St. Paul tells us, were once fornicators, idolators, adulterers, effeminate, Sodomites, covetous, thieves, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners, yet there they now are, *washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God:* and there may you also be, though vile as they, if, with them, you come in at the call of the gospel; for *yet there is room.* There is, says St. John, Rev. vii. 9. a *great multitude, which no man can number, out of*

every kindred, and tongue, and nation; multitudes from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; and *yet there is room.* There is room for you, poor negroes; and for you, I hope, some vacant seats in heaven are reserved. Therefore *I turn to the Gentiles; for to you also is the word of this salvation sent.* You may, with peculiar propriety, be represented by the poor, the blind, the halt, and maimed, in the highways and hedges. To you therefore I am sent with the offer of all the rich blessings of the gospel: and let me tell you, you are in extreme need of them, whether you feel your want or not: you need them more than liberty, than food, than health, than life itself; and without them, you must perish for ever. Come then, let this feast be adorned with your sable countenances, and furnished with guests from the savage wilds of Africa. Do not mistake me, as if I was just now inviting you to sit down at the Lord's table: alas! many have sat there, who are now banished for ever from that Saviour, whom they professed to commemorate; and shut up in the prison of hell. But I am inviting you to accept of the blessings of the gospel, which I have briefly explained to you. A hearty consent to this, and nothing short of it, will save you. Come then, ye poor Africans, come add yourselves to the guests at this divine entertainment; for yet there is room for you, and you are as welcome as kings and princes.

There being so much room left unoccupied in the spacious apartment, is represented as an excitement to the master of the feast to send out his servant to invite more guests: for when the servant had made this report, the master immediatly orders him to *go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that his house might be filled.* He could not bear it, that the seats about his table should be empty, or his provisions be lost for want of guests. So the blessed God will not suffer the death of his Son to be in vain, nor the mansions he has prepared to be empty. That Jesus may see his spiritual seed, and the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; and that the heavenly mansions he has prepared may be furnished with guests,

God has appointed the ministry of the gospel, and the means of grace to be continued from age to age; for this end he exercises a providential government over the world, and manages all its affairs in subserviency to the grand scheme of redemption, for peopling the heavenly world with colonies transplanted from our guilty globe. For this he has continued our sinful world, so ripe for destruction, through the space of near 6000 years; and he will not be defeated in his purpose. If you and thousands more should refuse, yet his feast shall be furnished with guests. He will send his gospel where it will not pass for such a trifle as it does among many of us. He will send it, where thousands of perishing sinners will eagerly embrace it, and obtain eternal salvation by it. But O! how deplorable will be your loss! Since his house shall and must be filled, O! why should it not be filled from Virginia, and particularly from among you, my dear people? Will you not make trial, whether there be not seats prepared in heaven for you? whether there be not room in the arms of divine mercy for you? whether the blood of Christ has not efficacy to procure pardon and life even for you, great sinners as you are? How can I forbear to urge this proposal upon my dear congregation? We meet together in the house of God on earth; and many of us sit down together at his table. And O! why should we not all meet together at the great supper of the Lamb in heaven? Why should we not, as it were, make an appointment, and engage to meet one anothere there, after the dispersion which death will soon make among us? While transported with so agreeable a thought, I feel myself zealous to execute the commission in my text.

Compel them to come in. Overcome them with arguments, subdue them with persuasions and entreaties, take no denial; never give over till you prevail. This is the commission of gospel-ministers: and O! that one of the meanest of them may be enabled to act according to it!

The patrons of persecution, those common enemies of liberty, religion, and human nature, have tortured this text to speak in their favour; and it has been their

misfortune to be confirmed in their savage sentiment by the opinion of good St. Augustine, who understood it as authorizing and even requiring the propagation of Christianity, and the suppression of erroneous opinions, by the terrors of the secular power. In answer to this, I might observe, that we often find the word here rendered *compel**, used in such a mild sense, as to signify only a compulsion by argument and intreaty. But it is sufficient to observe that it is evident Christ never commissioned his apostles, nor did they ever pretend to propagate his religion, like Mahomet, with a sword in their hand, but by dint of evidence, and the power of the Holy Spirit:—and indeed, no other arms were fit to propagate a rational religion. The terrors of the secular arm may scare men into the profession of a religion, but they have no tendency to enlighten the understanding, or produce a real faith; and therefore they are fitted only to make hypocrites, but can never make one genuine rational Christian. The weapons of the apostolic warfare, which were so mighty through God, were miracles, reasoning, intreaty, and the love of a crucified Saviour; and these were adapted to the nature of the human mind, to subdue it without violence, and sweetly captivate every thought into obedience to Christ.

These weapons, as far as they may be used in our age, I would try upon you. I would compel you to come in, by considerations so weighty and affecting, that they must prevail, unless reason, gratitude, and every generous principle be entirely lost within you. By the consideration of your own extreme perishing necessity; by the consideration of the freeness, the fulness, and sufficiency of the blessings offered; by the dread authority, by the mercy and love of the God

* ἀναγκάσον.

So Matt. xiv. 22. and Mark vi. 45. ἠνάγκασεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἐμβῆναι, Jesus compelled or constrained his disciples to go into a ship. St. Paul, in his reproof to St. Peter, Gal. ii 14. tells him, "Why dost thou *compel* or *constrain* [ἀναγκάζεις] the Gentiles to act as do the Jews?" In which places, the word signifies *to compel*, not by violence, but by command, persuasion, or example. And in this sense men are, and ought to be, compelled to embrace the gospel.—Thus Tertullian, Qui studuerit intelligere, *cogetur* et credere.

that made you, and who is your constant Benefactor; by the meekness and gentleness of Christ; by the labours and toils of his life; by the agonies of his death; by his repeated injunctions, and by his melting invitations; by the operation of the Holy Spirit upon your hearts, and by the warnings of your own consciences; by the eternal joys of heaven, and the eternal pains of hell; by these considerations, and by every thing sacred, important, and dear to you; I exhort, I intreat, I charge, I adjure you, I would compel you to come in. You have refused, you have loitered, you have hesitated long enough; therefore now at length come in; come in immediately without delay. Come in, that these rich provisions may not be lost for want of partakers, and that God's house may be completely furnished with guests. As yet there is room; as yet the guests are invited; as yet the door is not shut. The number of those who shall enjoy this great salvation is not yet made up. Therefore you may press in among them, and be added to their happy company. But ere long, the ministry of the gospel will be withdrawn, the servants be recalled, and no longer be sent to search for you. The door of heaven will be shut against all the workers of iniquity. Therefore, now is the time to come in.

I shall only urge, as another persuasive, the awful denunciation that concludes my text; *I say unto you, none of those men who were bidden*, and refused the invitation, shall so much as *taste of my supper*; that is, none, who now refuse to receive the blessings of the gospel, as they are offered, shall ever enjoy any of them; but must consume away a miserable eternity in the want of all that is good and happy.

SERMON LVI.

The Nature of Justification, and the Nature and Concern of Faith in it.

Rom. i. 16, 17.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for therein the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith—Or, therein is the righteousness of God by faith revealed to faith.*

HOWEVER little the gospel of Christ is esteemed in the world, it is certainly the most gracious and important dispensation of God towards the sons of men, or else our Bible is mere extravagance and fable; for the Bible speaks of it with the highest encomiums, and the sacred writers are often in transports when they mention it. It is called *the gospel of the grace of God*, Acts xx. 24; *the gospel of salvation*, Ephes. i. 13; *the glorious gospel*, or, *the gospel of the glory of* † *Christ*, 2 Cor. iv. 4.; *the gospel of peace*, Ephes. vi. 15; nay, its very name has something endearing in the sound, [Ευαγγέλιον,] *good tidings, joyful news.* It is *the wisdom of God in a mystery*, 1 Cor. ii. 7.; *the mystery which had been hid from ages and from generations*, Col. i. 26.; *the ministration of the Spirit, and of righteousness*, which far exceeds all former dispensations in glory. 2 Cor. iii. 8, 9. And it is represented as the only scheme for the salvation of sinners. When the wisdom of the world had used its utmost efforts in vain, it pleased God, by the despised preaching of this humble gospel, to save them that believe. 1 Cor. i. 21. In my text, it is called *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, whether Jew or Gentile.* St Paul, though the humblest man that ever lived, declares he would not be ashamed of professing and preaching the gospel of Christ, even in

* Doddridge in loc. † Ευαγγέλιον τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Rome, the metropolis of the world, the seat of learning, politeness, and grandeur. He represents it as a catholicon, an universal remedy, equally adapted to Jews and Greeks, to the posterity of Abraham, and the numerous Gentile nations, and equally needed by them all.

Now this must be all extravagance and ostentatious parade, unless there be something peculiarly glorious and endearing in the gospel. It must certainly give the most illustrious display of the divine perfections; it must be the most grand contrivance of infinite wisdom: the most rich and amazing exertion of unbounded goodness: and, particularly, it must bear the most favourable aspect upon the guilty sons of men, and be the best, nay, the only scheme for their salvation. And what are the glorious peculiarities, what are the endearing recommendations of this gospel? One of them, in which we are nearly interested, strikes our eyes in my text, *For therein is the righteoutness of God revealed from faith to faith.* Here let us inquire into the meaning of the expressions, and point out the connection.

The righteousness of God has generally one uniform signification in the writings of St. Paul; and by it he means that righteousness, upon the account of which a sinner is justified; that righteousness, for the sake of which his sins are forgiven, and he is restored to the divine favour: in short, it is our only justifying righteousness. It may be called the righteousness of God, to distinguish it from our own personal righteousness: it is the righteousness of God, a complete, perfect, divine, and God-like righteousness, and not the mean, imperfect, scanty righteousness of sinful, guilty men. So it seems to be taken, Rom. x. 3. *Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God:* where the righteousness of God is directly opposed to and distinguished from their own righteousness.

The various descriptions of this righteousness, and of justification by it, which we find in the apostolic writings, may assist us to understand the nature of it;

and therefore it may be proper for me to lay them before you in one view. It is frequently called the righteousness of Christ; and it is said to consist in his obedience: *by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous*, Rom. v. 19. Now obedience consists in the strict observance of a law; and consequently the obedience of Christ, which is our justifying righteousness, consists in his obedience to the law of God. Hence he is said to be *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*, Rom. x. 4, 5. To be justified by his righteousness, is the same thing as to be justified by his blood, Rom. v. 9; to be reconciled to God by his death, &c. verse 10. From whence we may learn, that the sufferings of Christ are a principal part of this righteousness; or, that he not only obeyed the precept, but also endured the penalty of the divine law in our stead; and that it is only on this account we can be justified. This righteousness is called the righteousness of God without the law, Rom. iii. 21.; an imputed righteousness without works, Rom. iv. 6. And it is plain, from the whole tenor of this epistle, and that to the Galatians, that the righteousness by which we are justified, is entirely different from our own obedience to the law: and hence we may learn, that our own merit or good works do not in whole or in part constitute our justifying righteousness; but that it is wholly, entirely, and exclusively the merit of Christ's obedience and sufferings.

This righteousness is often called the righteousness of faith. Thus, according to some, it is denominated in my text, which may be thus rendered, *For in it the righteousness of God by faith is revealed to faith:* and this is most agreeable to the phraseology of this epistle. Others, following our translation—or the apparent order of the original, understand it in another sense; yet still so as to assign faith a peculiar concern in the affair. *The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith;* that is, according to some, it is entirely and all through by faith*; or, from one degree of faith to another; or, from faith to faith, from believer to believer, all the world over, among Jews and

* See Mr. Locke.

Gentiles; or from the faithfulness of God in the word, to the grace of faith in the heart. You see, that whatever sense you put upon this difficult phrase, it still coincides with or countenances the translation which I would rather choose, *The righteousness of faith is revealed to faith.* So it is expressly called in Romans, iii. 22.; *the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Christ.* See chap. iv. 11. 13. x. 6. Phil. iii. 9. *Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* From whence we may infer, that faith has a peculiar concurrence of instrumentality in our justification by the righteousness of Christ. I need not enlarge on this particular; for to be justified by faith in Christ, in his blood, by believing in Christ, and the like, are such frequent scripture-expressions, as put the matter out of all doubt.

My text farther observes, that in the gospel this justifying righteousness is revealed to faith; that is, in the gospel it is clearly discovered, proposed, and offered as an object of faith. The light of nature is all darkness and uncertainty on this important point; it can only offer obscure and mistaken conjectures concerning the method of pardon and acceptance for a guilty sinner; it leaves the anxious conscience still unsatisfied, and perplexed with the grand inquiry, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? How shall such a guilty creature as I reobtain the favour of my provoked Sovereign?" It may suggest some plausible things in favour of repentance, as the only method of pardon; it may flatter the sinner, that a God of infinite goodness will not rigorously execute his law; and it may draw a veil over the attribute of his justice; and thus it may build the hopes of the sinner upon the ruin of the divine government, and the dishonour of the divine perfections. But a method of justification by the righteousness of another, by the obedience and death of an incarnate God; by his perfect obedience to the law, and complete satisfaction to justice, instead of the sinner; a method, in which sin may be pardoned, and, in the mean time, the honours of the divine government advanced, and the divine perfections

gloriously illustrated; this is *a mystery*, which was *hid from ages and generations;* this was a grand secret, which all the sages and philosophers, and all the sons of men, who had nothing but the light of nature for their guide, could not discover, nor indeed so much as guess at. This scheme was as far above their thoughts as the heavens are above the earth. Nothing but infinite wisdom could contrive it; nothing but omniscience could reveal it. In the writings of Moses and the prophets, indeed, we meet with some glimmerings of it; some few rays of gospel-light were reflected back from the Sun of righteousness, through the dark medium of 3 or 4000 years, and shone upon the minds of the Jews, in the sacrifices, and other significant types of the law, and in the prophecies of the Old Testament writers; and hence the apostle says, that *the righteousness of God is witnessed by the law and the prophets*, Rom. iii. 21.; but it is in the gospel alone that it is explicitly and fully revealed; in the gospel alone it is proposed in full glory, as a proper object for a distinct, particular, and explicit faith.

And hence you may easily see the strong and striking connection of the text. You may connect this sentence, *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith*, with the first part of a foregoing text, *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ;* and then the sense will be, "No wonder I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ among Jews or Gentiles, and even in Rome itself; for it makes a most glorious and important discovery, in which they are all concerned; a discovery which the Jews, with all the advantages of the law and the prophets, could not clearly make; a discovery which the Greeks, with all their learning and philosophy, and the Romans, with all their power and improvements, could not so much as guess at; and that is the discovery of a complete God-like righteousness, by which the guilty sons of men, of every nation under heaven, may obtain justification from all their sins; a righteousness which is a sufficient foundation for the hopes of sinners, and gives the most majestic and amiable view of the great God; a righteousness, without which Jews and Gen-

tiles, and even the Romans in the height of empire, must unavoidably, irreparably, universally, and eternally perish, in promiscuous ruin." Such a glorious and divine righteousness does the neglected and despised gospel reveal; such a benevolent, gracious, and reviving discovery does it make; and who would be ashamed of such a gospel. "For my part," says St. Paul, "I am not ashamed of it, but would boldly publish it unto kings and emperors, to sages and philosophers; and whatever sufferings I endure for its sake, still I glory in so good a cause, and would spend and be spent in its service."

Or we may join this clause, *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith,* with the last part of the preceding verse, *For it is the power of God unto salvation,* &c.; and then the connection will run thus: "The gospel of Christ, so destitute of all carnal and secular recommendations, is sufficiently recommended to universal acceptance by this, that it is the only powerful and efficacious expedient for the salvation of all such as believe it, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. And no wonder it is attended with this divine power and efficacy, for in it, and in it only, the righteousness of God by faith is revealed to the faith and acceptance of a guilty world. No religion but that of a Mediator can provide or propose such a righteousness; and yet, without such a righteousness, no sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, can be saved: and, on the other hand, the revelation of such a righteousness directly tends to promote the important work of salvation, as it encourages the despairing sinner, and inspires him with vigour; and as it lays a foundation for the honourable communication of the influences of the Holy Spirit, without which this work can never be effected."

I hope these things are sufficient to give you a view of the sense and connection of the text. And there is only one thing I would repeat and illustrate before I proceed to a methodical prosecution of my subject; and that is, That the righteousness of God, or the righteousness of Christ, on account of which we are justified, signifies the obedience and sufferings of Jesus

Christ, to answer the demands of the law, which we had broken; or, as it is usually expressed, "his active and passive obedience." He obeyed the law, and endured its penalty, as the surety or substitute of sinners; that is, he did all this, not for himself, but for them, or in their stead. This is a matter of so much importance, that you should by all means rightly understand it; and I hope it is now sufficiently plain without enlarging upon it, though I thought it necessary to repeat it.

My thoughts on this interesting subject I intend to dispose in the following order:

I. I shall briefly explain to you the nature of justifying faith, and shew you the place it has in our justification.

II. I shall shew, that no righteousness but that which the gospel reveals is sufficient for the justification of a sinner: And,

III. I shall evince that it is the gospel only which reveals such a righteousness.

I. I am to explain to you the nature of justifying faith, and shew you the place it has in our justification.

You see I do not propose to explain the general nature of faith, as it has for its object the word of God in general; but only under that formal notion, as it has a peculiar instrumentality in our justification. When I mentioned the term justification, it occurs to my mind that some of you may not understand it; and, for the sake of such, I would explain it. You cannot but know what it is to be pardoned, or forgiven, after you have offended; and it must be equally plain to you what it is to be loved, and received into favour, by a person whom you have offended; and these two things are meant by justification: when you are justified, God pardons or forgives you all your sins; and he receives you again into his love and favour, and gives you a title to everlasting happiness. I hope this important point is now sufficiently plain to you all; and I return to observe, that I intend to consider faith at present only under that formal notion, as we are

justified by it; and in that view it is evident that the Lord Jesus, as a Saviour who died for sinners, is its peculiar object. Hence a justifying faith is so often described in scripture in such terms as these; *Believing in Christ, faith in his blood,* &c. and the righteousness of Christ, by which we are justified, is called *the righteousness of faith, the righteousness which is of God by faith,* &c. Therefore a justifying faith in Christ includes these two things—a full persuasion of the truth of that method of salvation through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which the gospel reveals—and a hearty approbation of and consent to that method of salvation.

(I.) A justifying faith includes a full persuasion of the truth of that method of salvation through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which the gospel reveals.

Faith, in its general nature, is the belief of a thing upon the testimony of another. A divine faith is the belief of a thing upon the testimony of God; and consequently faith in Christ must be the belief of the testimony of God concerning him in the gospel. Hence faith is said to be a receiving *the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son;* and unbelief, on the other hand, is the *not believing the record which God gave of his Son,* 1 John v. 9, 10. Now St. John tells us, that the substance of *the record or testimony, which God hath given of his Son, is this: That God hath given unto us eternal life; and this life is in his Son,* verse 11.; that is, "God in the gospel testifies, that he has established and revealed a method of bestowing immortal life and blessedness upon guilty sinners, who were justly condemned to everlasting death. And he farther testifies, that it is only in and through his Son Jesus Christ that this life and blessedness can be obtained; it is only through him, that it can be hoped for; and nothing appears but horror and despair from every other quarter." Now faith is a firm, affecting persuasion of the truth of this gracious and important testimony. And as the foundation of all is, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the true Messiah,

promised as the Saviour of sinners; hence it is, that believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, &c. is so frequently the definition of faith.

The scheme of salvation through Jesus Christ, supposes that all are sinners, exposed to condemnation, and unable to make satisfaction for their offences, or merit the divine favour by any thing they can do or suffer; and represents the Lord Jesus as substituting himself in the place of the guilty, bearing the punishment due to their sin, and obeying the law of God in their stead; and it represents our injured Sovereign as willing to be reconciled to such of his guilty creatures, on this account; but then that, in order to enjoy the blessings of righteousness, they must, as guilty, helpless sinners, place their whole dependence upon it, and plead it as the only ground of their justification; and that, though they must abound in good works, yet they must not make these in the least the ground of their hopes of pardon and acceptance. This is the substance of the testimony of God in the gospel; this testimony has been repeatedly published in your ears; and if you have believed with a justifying faith, you have yielded a full assent to this testimony; you are thoroughly convinced, and deeply sensible that these things are true, and you can cheerfully venture your eternal all upon the truth of them. You are convinced that this Jesus is indeed the only Saviour; that his righteousness is alone sufficient, and to the entire exclusion of every other righteousness in point of justification. Such a faith may appear a very easy thing to a careless, impenitent sinner, who has imbibed this belief from his earliest days, and found no more difficulty in it than in learning his creed, or assenting to a piece of history. But a person of this character is not at all the subject of a saving faith; it is the poor self-condemned penitent, brokenhearted sinner, that is capable of such a faith; and truly it is no easy matter to him: for one that sees his sins in all their aggravations, the divine law, and the righteous severity of divine justice: one that finds the lusts and prejudices of his heart rising against this method of salvation as foolishness, and as giving an intolerable mortification to his pride and vanity; for such a one to

believe, is not any easy matter; *it is the working of God's mighty power.* Ephes. i. 19. But,

II. A justifying faith more peculiarly includes a hearty approbation of, and consent to, this method of salvation by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

To believe the gospel as a true history; to believe it as a true theory or speculation, with a languor, an indifferency or a dissaffection of heart, this indeed is the common popular faith of our country, and it generally prevails where the profession of christianity is become fashionable; but alas! it is not that faith by which we can be justified and saved. A hearty approbation of the way of salvation through Christ; a willing delightful dependence of the whole soul upon his righteousness; a free vigorous choice of it; and a cheerful consent to all the terms of the gospel; this is essential to such a faith. It is the greatest incongruity to suppose that it is sufficient to believe the gospel with a lukewarm indifferency, or a careless unaffecting assent; or that our faith in Christ should be merely the act of a constrained necessitated soul. He is the beloved Son of God, in whom he is well pleased; and we must be well pleased with him too, before we can expect salvation by him. To receive a scheme which God has so much at heart, a scheme, for the accomplishment of which Jesus bled and died; a scheme on which our everlasting life depends, and without which we are undone for ever, to receive such a scheme with a languid assent, what profaneness! what impiety!

If you have ever truly believed in Jesus Christ, my brethren, it has not been the languid act of a cold, impenitent, unwilling heart, but your whole souls have exerted their utmost vigour in it, and it has been the most cheerful, animated act of your whole lives. It is true, necessity had no small influence in the case. You saw, you felt yourselves lost for ever without this righteousness; you saw no other way of escape or safety; you found yourselves shut up to the faith; and it was this sense of your necessity that first set you upon seeking after Christ, and turned your thoughts towards this method of salvation. But when God *shined into your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of his*

glory in the face of Jesus Christ, when you received the first glances of his glorious righteousness, and heard, as with new ears, the offer of it in the gospel, stand, and pause, and recollect what were your sentiments, and the temper of your heart in that important and memorable hour. Was not their language, "Blessed Jesus! till now I have been blindly seeking after thee from a servile principle, not from the agreeable constraint of love, but from the painful compulsion of fear, horror, and necessity; not because I desired thee on account of thine own excellency, but because I was desirous to be saved from hell, though it should be by an unacceptable hand. I have been striving to work up my reluctant heart to a compliance with thy gospel, not because I saw thy glory, but merely because I must perish for ever if I rejected it. But now, when I see thy glory, O thou lovely Saviour, I long and languish for thee, and cheerfully receive thee, because I love thee. Salvation itself is endeared to me, by the thought that it comes from thy dear hand. I place all my dependence on thy righteousness, because I see it is all illustrious and amiable, and secures the glory of God, which I have tenderly at heart, as well as my salvation. I now most cheerfully consent to the method of salvation revealed in the gospel, not only because I must, but because I choose to do so. I see it is a scheme *well ordered in all things, and sure*, and therefore it is all my salvation, and all my desire. I would not only be saved, but I would be saved by thee, blessed Jesus! I am willing, I am desirous, that thou, and not I, should have the glory of it. I would rather see thy grace honoured than my own vanity and pride flattered, and therefore I cheerfully renounce my own righteousness, and count it but loss and dung, in comparison of thine, which I embrace with all my heart. Pardon is sweet to a guilty criminal; salvation is sweet to a perishing soul; but O! pardon by thy righteousness, salvation through thy grace, this is doubly sweet." Such, my brethren, has been, and such still is the language of your hearts, if you have ever received *the righteousness of Christ by faith.*

And hence it follows, that faith supposes the super-

natural illumination of the mind and renovation of the heart, by the power of divine grace. Alas! while nature is left in its original darkness and depravity, it has no such views of the way of salvation through Christ, nor any such delight in it. There are many, I am afraid, that secretly wonder what peculiar wisdom and grace there should be in the gospel, and why God should commend it so highly, and saints should be in raptures when they speak of it; for as for their part, they can discover no such great matters in it. Their hearts are cold and careless about it, or form insurrections against it. The way of salvation through the righteousness of Christ is something quite unnatural and mortifying to the sinful sons of men; they have no relish for it, no aptitude or inclination to seek salvation in this way; it is much more natural for them to choose some other, though it should be much more painful. They will submit to the heaviest penances and bodily austerities; they will afflict themselves with fasting; they will drudge at the duties of religion, in order to work out a righteousness of their own; and they are as fond of the covenant of works to obtain life, as if it had never been broken, But tell them of a free salvation, purchased by Jesus Christ, and offered in the gospel; tell them that it is only on account of his righteousness they can be pardoned, and that all their personal good works, however necessary for other purposes, must all stand for nothing in this affair; they are amazed, and wonder what you mean: it is strange unintelligible doctrine to them, and their hearts rise against it. Hence many a believer has found that it was easier for him to work up his heart to any thing than to believe in Jesus Christ, and that God alone could enable him to do this. But, when God works in him the work of faith with power, he opens his understanding to see a surprizing glory in the mediatorial scheme of salvation, and gives him a heart to relish it: and without this, no external recommendations of this scheme, no speculative conviction in its favour, can gain the cordial approbation of the sinner.

I shall now endeavour, in a few words, to shew you the peculiar place which faith has in our justification.

You may observe then, that as the righteousness of Christ is the peculiar ground of our justification, so the grace of faith has a peculiar reference to that righteousness; it is, as it were, the bent of the soul towards that particular object. Repentance has sin for its object; love the intrinsic glory and communicated goodness of the divine nature; charity and justice have a reference to man; and none of these objects are the proper grounds of our justification; and consequently none of these graces which terminate upon them can have any direct concurrence in it. But our justifying righteousness is the immediate, direct object of faith; and therefore faith must have a special instrumentality in our justification.

And if we recollect what has been said about the nature of faith, there will appear a peculiar propriety in conferring this honour upon it. It is certainly fit we should believe in him who is our Saviour; and it would be absurd to apply to him in that character, while we suspect him for an impostor. It is fit we should approve of the righteousness by which we are justified, and heartily consent to that scheme by which we are saved. And, on the other hand, it would be highly preposterous, that we should be justified and saved by a Saviour, and in a way we despise or disgust. These considerations shew not only the wisdom, but the grace of the constitution. Approve of the Savionr, and you shall be saved; trust in his righteousness, and you shall be justified; consent to the covenant of grace, and you shall inherit all its blessings; and could you desire lower or easier terms? This approbation, this trust, this consent is faith: and now, I hope, you see the peculiar place it has in our justification. Let us now proceed,

II. To shew you that no righteousness but that which the gospel reveals is sufficient for the justification of a sinner.

In order to form a right judgment of this matter, we must place ourselves in a proper situation, and view it in an advantageous point of light. Is a blind self-flattering sinner, who does not see the strictness of the law and justice of God, or who secretly murmurs at it as

too precise and rigid, who does not see the infinite evil of sin, but loves it, indulges it, and is expert in making excuses for it, and diminishing its aggravations, who forms his maxims of the divine government from the procedure of weak and particular mortals in human governments, who compares himself with his fellow sinners, and not with the divine purity and the holy law of God, whose conscience is secure, who places the tribunal of his supreme Judge far out of sight, and who forms his notions of his government not from his word, but from the flattering suggestions of his own deceitful heart: I say, is such a blind, partial, careless sinner a competent judge in this matter? Is he likely to form a just estimate of the evil of sin, and of that righteousness which will be sufficient for his acquittance before a just and righteous God? By no means. But it is easy for such a one to start objections against this method of justification, and offer many plausible arguments in favour of his own righteousness, and to extenuate his own guilt. But let him be awakened to see himself and his sins in a proper light, and let him see the purity and extent of the divine law, and make that the only test of his good works, let him realize the divine tribunal, and place himself in the immediate presence of his Judge, let him be put in this situation, and then the controversy will be soon at an end; then all his high thoughts of his own righteousness are mortified; all his excuses for his sins are silenced; and then he sees his absolute need of a perfect and divine righteousness, and the utter insufficiency of his own. O sirs! if you have ever placed yourselves in this posture, you have done for ever with all disputes on this point. What could ease your consciences then but the complete righteousness of Jesus Christ? O, "none but Christ, none but Christ," then appeared sufficient.

Here I beg leave to translate a very animated and striking passage, written about 200 years ago, by that great and good man, Calvin, who had long groped for salvation among the doctrines of merit in the church of Rome, but could find no relief, till the gospel discovered this righteousness to him. "It is a very easy thing, says he, to amuse ourselves with arguments for

the sufficiency of good works for justification, while we are ingeniously trifling in schools and colleges of learning; but when we come into the presence of God, we have done with all such amusements; for there it is a very serious affair, and not a ludicrous logomachy, or an idle dispute about words. There, there we must place ourselves, if we would profitably inquire after the true righteousness, and how we shall answer our celestial Judge when he shall call us to an account. Let us represent this Judge to ourselves, not such as our fancies would imagine him to be, but such as he is really represented in the scriptures; as one by whose brightness the stars are turned into darkness; by whose power the mountains are melted; at whose anger the earth trembles; by whose wisdom the wise are caught in their own craftiness; before whose purity, all things are turned into pollution; whose justice even angels are not sufficient to bear; who will by no means clear the guilty; whose vengeance, when once it is kindled, burns and penetrates to the lowest hell: let him, I say, sit Judge on the actions of men, and who can securely place himself before his throne of judgment?" *Lord, if thou mark iniquity, who, O Lord, shall stand!* "All must be condemned, and unavoidably perish." *Shall mortal man be* justified before God? or be *purer than his Maker? Behold, he putteth no trust in his servants; and his angels he chargeth with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth!* Job iv. 17, &c. *Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight; how much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water!* Job xv. 15, &c. "Eliphaz is struck silent; for he sees that God cannot be appeased even with angelical holiness, if their works should be brought to the impartial scale of justice. And certainly if our lives should be compared to the standard of the divine law, we must be stupid indeed, unless we are struck with the terror of its curses, and particularly of that, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.* And all the disputes we may have about

the method of justification are vain and insipid, unless we place ourselves as guilty before our heavenly Judge, and, solicitous for a pardon, voluntarily prostrate and empty ourselves before him.

"To this great tribunal, sinners, you must lift your eyes, that, instead of vainly exalting yourselves, you may learn to tremble before him. While the comparison is between man and man, it is easy for every man to think he has something which others should not despise; but when we place ourselves before God, all that confidence falls and perishes in an instant*."

I might go on with my quotation from this excellent author; but this is sufficient to shew you a grand pre-requisite to the impartial determination of this point. And now, with a deep impression of this, with a deep sense of our sins, and of the strictness of the law and justice, and placing ourselves, as in the presence of our righteous Judge, let us inquire what righteousness is sufficient for our justification before him.

It may be of service to observe that there is something singular in the phraseology of scripture on this point, and different from what is used in other cases of the same general nature. To receive a pardon is a very different thing in common language from being justified. When a man is pardoned, it supposes that he has broken the law, but that the law is dispensed with, and the threatened penalty not executed; but when he is justified, it supposes that he has a righteousness equal to the demands of the law, and therefore that he may be acquitted according to justice. These, you see, are very different things; but in the affair before us they are happily united. The sinner is said to be pardoned and justified at once; and the reason of this unusual dialect is this:—The sinner has broken the divine law, and has no obedience to answer its demands; and therefore his being freed from the guilt of sin and the threatened punishment, is, in this respect, a gracious unmerited pardon. But by faith he has received the righteousness of Christ; and God imputes it to him as though it were his own; and this righteousness answers all the

* *Calvin Instit.* lib. iii.

requisitions of the law, and it has no charges against him; so that in this respect he is justified, or pronounced righteous according to law and justice.

Hence it follows, from the very meaning of the terms used in this case, that no righteousness can justify us in the sight of God but that which is equal to all the demands of the divine law. It must be perfect, and conformed throughout to that standard; for if it be not, we cannot be pronounced righteous in the eye of the law; but the law charges and condemns us as transgressors, and its sentence lies in full force against us. And now, if any of you have such a perfect righteousness, produce it, glory in it, and carry it with you to the divine tribunal, and demand acquittance there. But if you have not (as, if you know yourselves, you must own you have not) then fall down as guilty sinners before your righteous Judge; confess that you dare not appear in his presence in your own righteousness, but lay hold of and plead the righteousness of Jesus alone, otherwise the law thunders out its terrors against you, and justice will seize you as obnoxious criminals.

It was from such premises as these that the apostle reasoned when he drew this conclusion, *that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified,* Rom. iii. 20, 28.; and that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law. He grants, that if any can produce a perfect righteousness of their own, they shall obtain life by the law: *the law,* says he, *is not faith; but the man that doth* these things *shall live in them.* Gal iii. 12. But then he proves that all the sons of men, both Jews and Gentiles, have sinned, and consequently have no righteousness agreeable to the law: he stops every mouth, and brings in the whole world as guilty before God; and hence he infers the impossibility of justification by the works of the law: and then he naturally introduces another righteousness equal to all the demands of the law. *But now,* says he, *the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested—even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe:—being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that*

is in Christ, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in the blood, for the remission of sins;—that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Rom. iii. 21—26. O glorious scheme of salvation! O complete, divine righteousness! a righteousness by which Jew and Gentile, the greatest sinner as well as the least, may be made divinely righteous, and completely justified, even at the bar of a holy and just God. Here, ye guilty sinners, ye condemned criminals, ye bleeding consciences, here is the only righteousness for you. Put forth the hand of faith, and humbly lay hold upon it. Here fix your trust, and renounce your own righteousness as filthy rags; for whatever you think of it now, this will be found the only defence at the tribunal of the supreme Judge.

It would be easy to collect a great variety of arguments to support this important truth; but if you carefully read over the apostolic writings, particularly this epistle to the Romans, and that to the Galatians, you cannot but be satisfied for yourselves. And this brings me in mind of a frank declaration of that true freethinker and impartial inquirer after truth, Dr. Watts. "If I may be permitted to speak of myself," says he, "I might acquaint the world with my own experience. After some years spent in the perusal of controversial authors, and finding them insufficient to settle my judgment and conscience, I resolved to seek a determination of my doubts from the Epistles of St. Paul, especially in that weighty doctrine of Justification. I perused his letter to the Romans with the most fixed meditation, laborious study, and importunate requests to God, for several months together. I very narrowly observed the daily motions of my own mind: I found it very hard to root out old prejudices, and to escape the danger of new ones. I met with some expressions of the apostle that swayed me to one opinion, and others that inclined the balance of my thoughts another way; but I bless the Divine Goodness that enabled me at last to surmount all these difficulties, and established my judgment and conscience in that glorious and forsaken doctrine of the justification of a

sinner in the sight of God, by the imputation of a perfect righteousness, which is not originally his own*." This was the practice of this excellent man; and you see the result of his search. Go you and do likewise; and I doubt not but you will make the same discovery. —I am,

III. and Lastly, To shew it is the gospel only that reveals such a righteousness as is sufficient for the justification of a sinner.

The Jewish religion, as I observed before, gave several intimations of this method of justification by the righteousness of another. There were many prophesies and types of this import; and this was undoubtedly the original design of sacrifices; for it is quite unaccountable, that ever man should imagine that they could appease the wrath of God, and procure the pardon of sin, by offering to him sacrifices of brutes in their stead, unless we suppose that God did at first institute this method, to signify that the way in which he would be reconciled to sinners was by the sufferings and death of another, as a sacrifice substituted in their room. This institution seems to have been immediately after the fall of man, when the first beam of gospel-light bleseed our world in that promise, *the seed of the woman*, &c.; for we are told that God made coats of skins, and with them covered our first parents. Gen. iii. 21. Now animal food was not allowed to man till after the flood; and consequently those beasts, whose skins were used for this purpose, were not killed for that use: and we cannot suppose they died naturally so soon after their creation. It is therefore most probable, that Adam had killed them for sacrifices; and that God had commanded him to do this, immediately upon the promulgation of that promise, to typify the manner of its accomplishment, namely by the sacrifice of Christ in the fulness of time. This practice we find continued by Cain and Abel: and thus Noah consecrated the new world after the flood. Gen. viii. 20.

But though the patriarchs and Jews had these intimations of the method of pardon and acceptance, they were very dark and perplexing to them; and just as

* Orthodoxy and Charity united. Essay vii. § 1.

much as they had of this light, just so much they had of the gospel; and therefore the gospel, taking the word in its full extent, claims the honour of this discovery.

Now, if we except the patriarchal and Jewish religion, which had a mixture of the gospel in it, there is none that pretends to discover a complete and perfect righteousness and atonement for the justification of a sinner. The religion of Mahomet is silent upon this head; and the Socrateses and Platos of heathen antiquity, who had only the light of nature for their guide, knew nothing about it; much less did the ignorant populace, who are always the greater part of mankind. The custom of sacrifice was indeed universal; but as it was received by a very remote tradition, mankind had quite lost its original design; and they corrupted it into the most absurd and cruel superstition. They offered their sacrifices to imaginary deities, or (as the apostle tells us) to devils. 1 Cor. x. 20. They were so unnatural and barbarous, that they offered human sacrifices, and even their own children, to propitiate their angry gods. And, if we may believe some of their best authors, this was often practised by the express command of their oracles:—a sufficient evidence that it was not the true God that gave answers by them. Alas! how were the poor creatures bewildered and perplexed about the method of expiating their sins! They spared no cost; *they offered even the fruit of their body for the sin of their souls*, but alas! how vain, as well as impious a sacrifice was this! and yet this was the utmost that nature in distress could do. They knew nothing of the great atonement which was to be made by the High Priest of the christian profession, which the gospel reveals to us. Nay, the Jews themselves are often reproved by the prophets for their self-righteous trust in their sacrifices, to the neglect of their morals, and the grand atonement which they prefigured. The light of nature might teach the heathen world, that if they perfectly obeyed the law of God, they might be assured of his favour, or at least that they should not be punished; but it informed them in the

mean time, that they had not done so, but, on the other hand, had repeatedly broken the law of God; and they had no notion at all of the possibility of their being justified by the righteousness of another.

This alone determines the point I am now proving. I have shewn already, that a sinner cannot be justified but by a perfect righteousness; and it is evident that none of the sons of men can pretend to such a righteousness. Where then can it be found? Consult the light of nature; ask the multitude in the heathen world; nay, ask their most improved sages and philosophers, and you will find all silent, all bewildered and perplexed: nothing was ever farther from their thoughts than a complete atonement for sin by the death of an innocent and divine person. I appeal to such of the negroes as came from Africa as the best judges in this case. Did you ever hear in your own country, of a righteousness equal to all the requisitions of the law of God, by which you could be justified? Was there no thoughtful person among you whose conscience was uneasy about his sins against a holy God, and who was concerned how he should obtain a pardon? And what way did he take to ease his mind? Alas! he knew nothing of *the righteousness of God by faith.* This happy discovery, poor creatures, you have met with in the land of your bondage; and O! if you make a proper use of it, it will make your slavery the greatest blessing to you.

The light of nature might surmise a great many things upon this head, but alas! all was uncertain, and more frequently the dictates of ignorance and self-flattery than of an enlightened mind. It might intimate, "that God is the compassionate Father of mankind, and therefore would dispense with the threatnings of his law, and not execute them rigorously upon his own creatures." This we often hear urged by sinners among ourselves, who, notwithstanding their profession of Christianity, will form a system of religion, and a scheme of reconciliation with God, according to their own selfish and flattering prejudices; and it seems to them incredible that God should inflict eternal punishment on his own creatures for the sins of a few years.

But to this it might be replied, That since God is the Father of mankind, it is a more unnatural and aggravated wickedness to sin against him: that he is not only the Parent, but also the Lawgiver and Judge of the world, and that he must sustain both these characters with honour. He must exercise not only the fondness and indulgent discipline of a father, but also the justice and righteous severity of a ruler and judge: he must maintain the honour of his law, and preserve his government from contempt; and therefore the communications of his goodness must be consistent with justice. He must also execute his laws upon sinners, in order to warn and deter others; and therefore every sinner must tremble for fear of the execution of the divine threatenings upon him. To all this I may add, That the miseries that are inflicted by divine Providence in this world, and that very often upon the best of men, must increase the perplexity, and leave the sinner in a dreadful suspense.

If God does not suffer the sins even of the best of men always to escape unpunished in this world, but afflicts them with pains, sickness, and an endless variety of calamities, how can our reason, that knows so little of the counsels of Heaven, assure us that he will not punish them also, and that with greater severity, in the world to come? Nothing but a revelation from himself could ease an anxious mind from this dread suspicion.

The light of nature may also perhaps surmise, "That repentance and reformation are sufficient to procure the pardon of sin:" and mankind seem naturally inclined to look for pardon in this way. Hence sinners among ourselves, notwithstanding the clearer discoveries of the gospel, fly to repentance and reformation, not only as a pre-requisite to their salvation, but as sufficient ground of acceptance; and they gaze and wonder at a man if he intimates the contrary. It must be granted on all hands, that repentance and reformation are necessary; but the question is, Are repentance and reformation alone sufficient? And this is easily answered, if what has been proved before be true, viz. That no righteousness but that which is perfect, and

fully conformed to the divine law, can be sufficient for our justification. Now repentance, at best, is but a reformation from a wrong course, and a return to obedience; which should never have been interrupted. If the reformation were perfect, it would be but doing what we are obliged to do for the present time; and consequently it can be no atonement or satisfaction to the law for past offences; but alas! it it imperfect, and therefore cannot pay the debt of obedience for the present time. The sinner, in the midst of all his repentance and reformation, is sinning still; there are guilty imperfections in his best duties; and can these atone for his past sin? So that repentance and reformation cannot be a sufficient justifying righteousness. Again, What kind of government would that be among men, in which all crimes were pardoned upon repentance? What encouragement would this give to offenders? How soon would such a government fall into contempt? and what a low idea would it give of the wisdom and justice of the ruler, and of the evil of sin! And shall the Supreme Ruler imitate so weak a conduct, and thus obscure his perfections, depreciate his laws, and encourage vice!

It is a virtue in a private man to forgive an injury; and it may be a piece of generosity in such a one to give up some of his rights: but, as I have told you God is not to be considered, in this case, as a private person, but as a Ruler, a supreme Ruler, at the head of the universe; and sin is an offence against him in that capacity; and therefore for reasons of state, it is not fit he should put up with it, or remit it merely upon the sinner's repentance. He must maintain the dignity of law and government, and consult the public good; not the good of this man and that, nor even of the whole race of men, but of men through all their generations; of angels through all their various ranks and orders, and in short, of the whole universe of reasonable creatures; and the interest of individuals must be subservient to the more general good of the whole. An error in such an extensive government, through an excessive lenity towards offenders, would have a most extensive ill influence, and injure more world's

than we know of. If the magistrate in one particular government be lax in the execution of the laws, he may injure a whole nation; and if he should suppose all the nations of the earth united in one universal monarchy, under one head; if that universal monarch should be remiss in the execution of justice, the consequence would be still more extensively mischievous. But what would be the consequence, if the universal Ruler of heaven and earth and the whole creation, should relax his law, and suffer sin to go unpunished, upon so cheap a retaliation as repentance? No human government could be supported upon this principle, much less the divine.

Further: It should be considered, that, in order to encourage offenders to repent, it is necessary it should be made a fixed constitution, and openly published, that whosoever in all time coming should be guilty of any offence against the laws of God, he shall be forgiven if he does but repent. Now what encouragement would such a declaration give to sin! It would also be unprecedented in human governments. It is true, civil rulers do forgive some offenders: but then they do not declare beforehand that they will do so, or who the objects of their clemency shall be. To make a previous declaration of this, would be to give a licence to men to break the law. Let it be also considered, that when civil rulers forgive criminals, there is no necessity they should receive them into special favour; but in the divine government these two things are inseparable: there is no medium between high favour and misery. When God forgives, he receives the sinner into complete happiness and intimacy with himself, as well as rescues him from punishment. And is it fit he should do this, merely upon his repentance? How would such a conduct look in human governments!

Finally, The pardon of a crime is a matter of sovereignty, and only has place in such governments where the royal prerogative is above law, and has a power to dispense with it. Whether such a prerogative belongs to the divine government (that is, whether it would be a perfection upon the whole in such a government)

I shall not now dispute: but suppose it be, still it is a matter of sovereignty; that is, it lies entirely in the breast of the Supreme Ruler whether he will pardon penitents or not; and they can know his pleasure no other way but by his declaring it. This consideration therefore shews the necessity of a revelation from God to give a sinner assurance that he will pardon him upon any terms. The light of nature leaves a sinner entirely at mercy, and awfully uncertain whether ever he can reobtain the favour of his offended Sovereign. Now this revelation we have in the gospel, with the additional discovery of the way in which forgiveness and acceptance can be obtained. And it appears, from this short survey, that it is in the gospel alone we can find this discovery.

I shall now conclude with two reflections.

I. Let this subject lead us to a strict examination of the ground of our hopes, whether they be founded on the righteousness of God alone, or partly at least upon our own. To speak freely, I am afraid that some of you, my dear people, have built upon this sandy foundation: this may be the case of some of you who have very fair characters; for it is such sort of persons, and not those who make little or no pretensions to good works that are most in danger of the extreme of self-righteousness. I therefore beg you would inquire after this sly, lurking delusion; a delusion which perverts the best things into the worst, and makes your good works the occasion of your destruction, instead of means of salvation. I beg you would inquire, whether ever you have been deeply sensible of the aggravated evil of sin, the perfection of God's law, the strictness of his justice, and the guilty imperfections of your own best works: whether ever you have seen the glory of God in the gospel, and the excellency and sufficiency of the righteousness of Christ? Have you cheerfully embraced it with your whole souls? and do you lay the whole dependance of your salvation upon it? My brethren, how are your hearts affected towards the gospel in this age of infidelity, when it is treated with sneer and ridicule, and browbeaten with contempt and insult? Do you glory in it, and venture your all upon

it? Do you find it is the only relief for your wounded consciences, the only cordial for your sinking hearts? Do your whole souls embrace it with the tenderest endearment, and tenaciously cling to it as the only *(tabula post naufragium)* plank to keep you from sinking, after the general wreck of human nature? Do you relish its doctrines, even those that are the most mortifying to your pride and vanity, and love to hear them honestly preached? Are the humble, despised doctrines of the cross sweet to you, and the very life of your souls? If you can give a comfortable answer to these inquiries, then,

II. This subject affords you abundant encouragement, and strong consolation. It is true you can never think too humbly of yourselves. You are as sinful as you can possibly suppose yourselve to be: your righteousness is as insufficient and imperfect, and you are as undeserving of the favour of God as you can possibly imagine. But it is not to yourselves that you look for a righteousness which will bear you out at the bar of your judge: you have been obliged to give up that point for ever: you tried to stand upon your own footing as long as you could, but you found it would not do. And now your only refuge is the righteousness of Christ by faith; here you rest, and you look for salvation in no other way. My brethren, I would fain do honour to this righteousness; but alas! the highest thing I can say of it is quite too low. It is indeed a righteousness sufficient for all the purposes for which you want it; it is a sure, a tried foundation. Thousands have built their hopes upon it, and it has never failed one of them yet: you may make the experiment with the same safety. There is not a charge which the law or justice, your own conscience, or Satan the accuser of the brethren, can bring against you, but what it can fully answer. Here then is safe footing, and let nothing drive you from it: and O give glory to God for so great a blessing!

SERMON LVII.

The Success of the Ministry of the Gospel, owing to a Divine Influence*.

1 Cor. iii. 7.

So then neither is he that plants any thing, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase.

THE design of God in all his works of creation, providence, and grace, is to advance and secure the glory of his own name; and therefore though he makes use of secondary causes as the instruments of his operations, yet their efficacy depends upon his superintending influence. It is his hand that sustains the great chain of causes and effects, and his agency pervades and animates the worlds of nature and of grace.

In the natural world, he makes use of the instrumentality of the husbandman to till the ground, to sow the seed, and water it. But it is he that commands the clouds to drop down fatness upon it, and the sun to diffuse its vital influence. It is he that continues to the earth, and the other principles of vegetation, their respective virtues; and without this influence of his the husbandman's planting and watering would be in vain; and, after all his labour, he must acknowledge, that *it is God that giveth the increase.*

So in the world of grace, God uses a variety of suitable means to form degenerate sinners into his image, and fit them for a happy eternity. All the institutions of the gospel are intended for this purpose, and particularly the ministry of it. Ministers are sowers sent out into the wild field of the world, with the precious seed of the Word. It is the grand business of their life to cultivate this barren soil, to plant trees of righteousness, and water them that they may bring

* Dated Hanover, November 19, 1752.

forth the fruits of holiness. It is by the use of painful industry that they can expect to improve this wilderness into a fruitful field; and the Lord is pleased to pour out his spirit from on high at times to render their labours successful; so that they who *went forth bearing precious seed* with sorrow and tears, return *bringing their sheaves with joy.* But alas! they meet with disappointments enough to convince them that all their labours will be in vain, if a sovereign God deny the influences of his grace. The agency of his holy spirit is as necessary to fructify the word, and make it the seed of conversion, as the influences of heaven are to fructify the earth, and promote vegetation. A zealous Paul may plant the word, and an eloquent Apollos may water it; one may attempt to convert sinners to christianity, and the other to build them up in faith, but they are both nothing as to the success of their labours, unless God gives the increase; that is, unless he affords the influence of his grace to render their attempts successful in begetting and cherishing living religion in the hearts of men. This is the great truth contained in my text: *Neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*

The Corinthians had been blest with the labours of several ministers, particularly of the apostle Paul, who had been the happy instrument of turning them from their native heathenism, and planting the gospel among them, and of Apollos, who succeeded him, and watered the good seed he had planted among them. But the Corinthians, instead of peaceably and thankfully improving the different gifts of different ministers for their spiritual and everlasting benefit, fell into factions, through a partial admiration of the one, in opposition to the other. Some of them were for Paul, as an universal scholar, and a strong reasoner; others were all for Apollos, as an accomplished orator. And thus they considered these ministers of Christ, rather as the ring-leaders of factions than as unanimous promoters of the same catholic christianity. To suppress this party spirit, the apostle asks them, *Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos?* "What mighty beings would you make us

in your idolatrous attachment to us? Alas! what are we more than feeble ministers of Christ, by whom ye believed? We were not the authors of your faith, but the humble instruments of it in the divine hand; and the success that either of us have had has not been from our own power, but just as God hath been pleased to give to every man (ver. 5.): I first planted the gospel among you; Apollos afterwards watered it; this was all we could do: but we could not make it bear the fruits of holiness in one soul. It was God alone that gave the increase, and made our respective labours successful (ver. 6.); therefore turn your regard to him alone:—*Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Isai. ii. 22. "Do not idolatrously share the honour of your conversion between God the efficient, and us, the humble instruments of it; but ascribe it to him alone: for *neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that gave the increase:* "he is all in all."

When we see a people enjoy the frequent cultivations of the gospel, and the means of spiritual fruitfulness, and yet few new trees of righteousness planted, and those, that have been planted, seemingly withering and unfruitful, we cannot but conclude that something is wanting; without which all the means they enjoy will be of no service. We should naturally turn our thoughts to an inquiry, what was wanting, had we tilled our lands from year to year without a crop. And since we find at present, that notwithstanding all the labours bestowed upon us, we lie in a deep sleep, and hardly know what it is of late to be animated with the news of some careless sinner here and there awakened to serious concern about his eternal estate, it is high time to enquire what is wanting? There is certainly something wanting, which is of greater consequence than any thing we have. Here are the gospel, and its ordinances, which at times have done great things: and sinners have yielded to their resistless energy: here is a minister, who, however weak, has sometimes been the happy instrument of giving a sinner an alarm, and speaking a word in season to those that were weary:

here are hearers that crowd our sanctuary; hearers of the same kind with those whom we have seen ere now fall under the power of the word. And what, then, is wanting? Why, God, that alone can give the increase, is not here by the influences of his grace; and, in his absence, *neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth;* they are all nothing together; and may labour till doomsday, and never convert one soul. *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?* Where is he that can do more execution with one feeble sentence, than we can with a thousand of our most powerful sermons? Why, he hath hid his face; and hence *there is none that calleth upon his name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of him,* Isai. lxiv. 7. And till the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, nothing but briars and thorns will come up among us. Chap. xxxii. 13, 15.

Let your thoughts, therefore, with eager attention now pursue me, while I am proving, illustrating, and making remarks pertinent to our case, from this affecting truth contained in the text, That the success of the ministry of the gospel with respect to saints and sinners, entirely depends upon the concurring influences of divine grace; or, that, without the divine agency to render the gospel successful, all the labours of its ministers will be in vain.

This truth can give us no surprize as a new discovery, if we have any acquaintance with the present degeneracy of human nature—with the declarations and promises of the word of God—with the accounts of the different success of the means of grace in various periods of the church---or with matters that might have come within the compass of our own experience and observation.

I. Such is the present degeneracy of human nature, that all the ministrations of the gospel cannot remedy it, without the concurring efficacy of divine grace.

So barren is the soil, that the seed of the word falls upon it and dies, and never grows up; as though it had never been sown there, till it be fructified by divine grace. It is a soil fruitful of briars and thorns, which grow up, and choke the word; so that it becometh unfruitful till divine grace root them up. Or

it may be represented by a rocky or stony soil, where the word of God can take no deep root, and therefore withers till it be mollified by influences from heaven. Thus our Lord represents the matter in the famous parable of the sower. Matt. xiii. 3, &c. 18, &c.

The metaphors used in sacred scripture to illustrate this case, sufficiently prove the degeneracy of mankind, and their entire opposition to the gospel. They are represented as spiritually dead, Ephes. ii. 1. John v. 25.; that is, though they are still capable of the exercises of reason and animal actions, yet they are really destitute of a supernatural principle of spiritual life, and incapable of suitable exercises towards God. And can a Paul or an Apollos quicken the dead with convictive arguments, with strong persuasions, or tender and passionate expostulations? No; none but he can do it, whose almighty voice bade Lazarus come forth. Sinners are also represented as blind, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Now what can feeble mortals do to such? We can exhibit divine things before them; we can expose the horrid deformity of sin, and its tremendous consequences; we can display the glories of God, the beauty of holiness, and the allurements of redeeming love; but, alas! all this is but like exposing colours to the blind. We cannot open their eyes; we cannot communicate such views of things to their minds as are in any measure adequate to the things themselves. What can tender arguments avail to break hearts of stone? What signifies reasoning to govern headstrong obstinacy, which regards it no more than a whirlwind? What can persuasions do to extirpate inveterate, implacable enmity? Rom. viii. 7. What can the charms of eloquence do to charm deaf adders that stop their ears? Psalm lviii. 4. The Israelites might as well pretend to overthrow the walls of Jericho with the sound of rams-horns, as we with our feeble breath to overthrow the strong holds of Satan in the hearts of sinners! It is the divine agency alone that gives the success in both cases. Clay cannot open the eyes of the blind, except in his almighty hands, who could form a world out of nothing, and

who can work without or against means as easily as with them.

The scripture-representations of the degeneracy of mankind are confirmed by universal experience. If we form any observations of ourselves or others, we find that the whole bent of our souls by nature is contrary to the gospel. The gospel is designed to reclaim men from sin; but they are obstinately set upon it: it is designed to make sin bitter to them, and to dissolve their hearts into tender sorrows for it; but we naturally delight in sin, and our hearts are hard as the nether mill-stone: it is intended to bring apostate rebels back to God, and the universal practice of holiness; but we love estrangement from him, and have no inclination to return. We abhor the ways of strict holiness, and choose to walk in the imaginations of our own hearts. The gospel is calculated to advance the divine glory, and abash the pride of all flesh, in the scheme of salvation it reveals; but this is directly contrary to the disposition of the sinner, who is all for his own glory. This requires no tedious arguments to prove it. Look in upon your own hearts; look back on your own conduct; look round you on the world; and there the evidences of it will glare upon you.

Now, since the innate dispositions of men are thus averse to the gospel, it is evident that nothing but divine power can make it effectual for their sanctification. Instructions may furnish the head with notions, and correct speculative mistakes; but they have no power to sway the will, and sweetly allure it to holiness. Persuasions may prevail to bring men to practise what they had omitted through mistake, carelessness, or a transient dislike; but they will have no effect where the heart is full of innate enmity against the things recommended. In this case, he that planteth, and he that watereth, is nothing; it is God alone can give the increase; as is more than intimated by,

II. The promises and declarations of the word, which appropriate all the success of the gospel to God alone.

Jehovah is not fond of ostentation and parade, nor

wasteful in throwing away his blessings where they are not needed; and therefore if the means of grace were sufficient of themselves to convert sinners and edify believers, he would not make such magnificent promises of the supernatural aids of his grace, nor claim the efficacy of them as his own. He would not assert the insufficiency of them without his influence, nor assign the withdrawment of his grace as one cause of their unsuccessfulness. But all this he does in his word.

Notwithstanding all the miraculous as well as ordinary means of grace which the Israelites enjoyed, there was need of this divine promise, *The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,* Deut. xxx. 6. And this promise was not peculiar to the Mosaic dispensation of the covenant of grace, which was less clear and efficacious; but we find that one superior excellency of the gospel-dispensation is, that it is more abundant in such promises. It is to the gospel-church that this promise is more particularly made; *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel,* &c.; *not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt,* &c. *But this is the covenant that I will make with them: I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts,* Jer. xxxi. 31, 33. Heb. viii. 8, &c.

This is a promise of so much importance, that it is frequently repeated with some circumstantial alteration, as the very life of the New Testament church. *I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever; and I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me,* Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Ezekiel echoes back the same language by the inspiration of the same Spirit, *I will give them one heart; and I will put a new spirit within them; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh; and I will give them an heart of flesh; and they shall walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them,* Ezek. xi. 19, 20. See also chap. xxxvi. 26, 27.

What was the success of St. Peter's sermon (Acts ii.) in the conversion of 3000, but the accomplishment of those promises in Joel and Zechariah, *I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.* (Joel ii. 28, 29.) *I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look*, &c. Zech. xii. 10. These promises were substantially renewed by Christ, to encourage the drooping apostles, John xvi. 8, 9, 10.: *I will send the Spirit; and when he is come, he will convince the world*, &c. All their miraculous powers were not sufficient for the conviction of mankind, without the agency of the divine Spirit; but by this, that promise of the Father to his Son was accomplished: *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*, Psal. cx. 3.

I might subjoin many other promises of the same kind; but these are sufficient to shew the absolute necessity of divine influence, or the utter insufficiency of the best means without it. And what farther time might be allotted to this particular, I shall lay out upon this pertinent and useful remark, which, if rightly attended to, would rectify mistakes, and remove many scruples and controversies upon this point. The remark is this, That the promises of God to bestow blessings upon us, do not render needless our most vigorous endeavours to obtain them; and, on the other hand, that our most vigorous endeavours do not supersede the influences of the Spirit to work in us the dispositions we are labouring after; or, That *that* may be consistently enjoined upon us as a duty, which is promised by God free favour; and *vice versa*. This may be illustrated by various instances. God commands us as strictly to circumcise the foreskins of our hearts, to make ourselves new hearts and new spirits (Jer. iv. 4.), and to cleanse ourselves from mortal pollution (Isa. i. 16.) as if this were wholly our work, and he had no efficiency in it. In the mean time, he promises as absolutely to circumcise our hearts to love him, to give us new hearts, and to purge us from all our filthiness, and from all our abominations, as though he performed all the work without our using means. Now we are sure

these things are consistent; for the sacred oracles are not a heap of contradictions. And how does their consistency appear? Why, thus: It is our duty to use the most vigorous endeavours to obtain these graces promised, because it is only in the use of vigorous endeavours that we have reason to expect divine influences. And yet these endeavours of ours do not in the least work those graces in us, and therefore there is certainly as much need of the promised agency of divine grace to effect the work, as if we should do nothing at all. Our utmost endeavours fall entirely short of it, and do not entitle us to divine assistance; and this we must have an humble sense of, before we can receive the accomplishment of such promises as the effect of free grace alone. But we should continue in these endeavours, because we have no reason to hope for the accomplishment of the promises in a course of sloth and negligence. This point may be illustrated by the consistency of the use of means and the agency of providence in the natural world. God has peremptorily promised, *that while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest shall not cease*, Gen. viii. 22. But this promise does not render it needless for us to cultivate the earth; nor does all our cultivation render this promise needless: for all our labour would be in vain without the influence of divine providence; and this influence is to be expected only in the use of labour. Thus in the moral world, the efficiency belongs to God, as much as if we made no use of means at all; and the most vigorous endeavours are as much our duty as if we could effect the work ourselves, and he had no special hand in it. Were this remark attended to, it would guard us against the pernicious extremes of turning the grace of God into wantonness, and pleading it as an excuse for our idleness; and of self-righteousness, and depending upon our own endeavours. In this guarded manner does St. Paul handle this point: *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 12, 13. But to return: As we may infer the necessity of divine influences from the promises of God, so

We may infer the same thing from the many passages of sacred writ ascribing the success of the gospel upon sinners, and even upon believers, to the agency of divine grace. If even a well-disposed Lydia gives a believing attention to the things spoken by St. Paul, it is, *because the Lord hath opened her heart.* Acts xvi. 14. Thus the Philippians believed, because, says the apostle, *to you it is given on the behalf of Christ to believe.* Phil. i. 29. Thus the Ephesians were spiritually alive, because, says he, *you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* Ephes. ii. 1. Faith is not of ourselves; but is expressly said to be the gift of God. Ephes. ii. 8. Nay, the implantation of faith is represented as an exploit of omnipotence, like that of the resurrection of Christ. Hence the apostle prays, Ephes. i. 19, 20. that the Ephesians might be made deeply sensible of the *exceeding greatness of his power towards us that believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.* Repentance is also the gift of God: Christ is exalted to bestow it. Acts v. 31. When the Jewish Christians heard of the success of the gospel among the Gentiles, they unanimously ascribed it to God: *then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life,* Acts xi. 18.: and it is upon this encouragement that St. Paul recommends the use of proper means to reclaim the obstinate: *if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth,* 2 Tim. ii. 25. Regeneration also, in which faith and repentance and other graces are implanted, is always ascribed to God. If all things are made new, *all these things are of God.* 2 Cor. v. 17, 18. If while others reject Christ some receive him, and so are honoured with the privilege of becoming the sons of God, it is not owing to themselves, but to him. *They are born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God,* John i. 11, 12, 13. He begets such of his own sovereign will by the word of truth, James i. 18.; and every good and perfect gift with which they are endowed is not from themselves, but from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, who is the great origin of all moral

excellency, as the sun is of light. ver. 17. Hence this change is exprest by such terms as denote the divine agency, and exclude that of the creature; as a new birth, John iii. 3; *a new creation*, 2 Cor. v. 17. Col. iii. 10.; the workmanship of God *created in Christ Jesus*, Eph. ii. 10.; a resurrection from the dead, John v. 25. Eph. ii. 1. Col. iii. 1. Now it is the greatest absurdity to speak of a man's begetting, or creating himself, or raising himself from the dead. Thus we find that the first implantation of grace in the heart of a sinner is entirely the work of God; and, lest we should suppose that, when it is once implanted, it can flourish and grow without the influence of heaven, we find that the progress of sanctification in believers is ascribed to God, as well as their first conversion. David was sensible, after all his attainments, that he could not run the way of God's commandments unless God should enlarge his heart. Ps. cxix. 32. All the hopes of Paul concerning his promising converts at Philippi depended upon his persuasion, that *he that had begun a good work in them, would perform it until the day of Christ.* Phil, i. 6. Nay, it was upon this he placed his own entire dependence. *We are not sufficient of ourselves*, says he, *to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.* 2 Cor. iii. 5. If I am faithful, it is "because I have obtained mercy of the Lord to make me so. 1 Cor. vii. 25. *By the grace of God I am what I am; and if I have laboured more abundantly than others, it is not I, but the grace of God that was with me.* 1 Cor. xv. 10. *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.* Phil. iv. 13. He was relieved under his despondencies by this answer, *My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in weakness.* 2 Cor. xii. 9. This is more than intimated in his prayers for himself and others: for example, *May the God of peace make you perfect in every good work, to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ!* Heb. xiii. 21. And indeed all the prayers of the saints for the aids of divine grace imply the necessity of them; for they would not pray for superfluities, or for what they already have in a sufficient measure. It is the

Spirit that helps our infirmities in prayer, and other exercises of devotion, Rom. viii. 24: and all our preparation for the heavenly state and aspirations after it, are of God. *He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.* 2 Cor. v. 5. In a word, *it is God that worketh all our works in us.* Isa. xxvi. 12.; *it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure.* Phil. ii. 13. Now the actual communication of divine influences, implies their necessity. Accordingly, we find

The necessity of divine influences is asserted in the plainest terms in scripture. *No man*, says Christ, *can come unto me, except the Father draw him.* John vi. 44. *He that hath heard and learned of the Father, and he only, will come to him,* ver. 45.: and this influence is not purchased by our endeavours, but it is the free gift of grace. Hence Christ varies his former declarations into this form; *no man can come unto me except it be given unto him of my Father;* ver. 65. and the agency of divine grace is necessary, not only to draw sinners to Christ at first, but also to make them fruitful afterwards. Hence Christ represents even the apostles as dependent upon him as the branch upon the vine; and tells them plainly, "that without him they can do nothing. John xv. 4, 5. Through all the stages of the Christian life, we depend entirely upon him; and without his influences, we should wither and die like a blasted flower, however blooming and fruitful we were before. Hence, says God to his people, *In me is thy fruit found.* Hosea xiv. 8. Since then this is the case, it will follow, that when God is pleased to withhold his influences, all the means of grace will be unsuccessful. Accordingly we find,

The unsuccessfulness of the gospel is often resolved into the withholding or withdrawing of the influences of grace, as one cause of it. Thus Moses resolves the obstinacy of the Israelites under all the profusion of wonders that had attended them, into this, as one cause of it: *The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.* Deut. xxix. 2, 3, 4. If none believe the report of the gospel, it is because the arm of the Lord is not

revealed. Isa. liii. 1. "If the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are hidden from the wise and prudent, while they are revealed to babes; it is because God in his righteous judgment and sovereign pleasure, hides them from the one, and reveals them to the other." Matt. xi. 25, 26. Nay, the evangelist speaks in yet more forcible terms, when speaking of the unbelief of the Jews, who were witnesses of Christ's convictive miracles and discourses; *therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts*, John xii. 39, 40.; and in the same strain St. Paul speaks: *he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* Rom. ix. 18, &c. These passages are so opposite to the prevailing divinity of the age, that they are dangerous weapons to meddle with; and it is well they are the very words of scripture, otherwise we should be charged with blasphemy for mentioning the truth contained in them. We must indeed be cautious that we do not infer from these scriptures any such horrid doctrine as this, that men are compelled to sin, and pushed on to ruin, by a necessitating decree, or the resistless impulse of providence; or that, though they were disposed to turn to God, they are judicially kept back and hindered by the divine hand. This would be contrary to the whole current of scripture, which charges the sin and ruin of sinners upon themselves; but these passages mean, that God denies to obstinate sinners those influences of his grace which are necessary to convert them, and which, if communicated, would have subdued their utmost obstinacy; and that in consequence of this denial, they will rush on in sin and irreclaimable impenitence, and perish; but yet that God, in denying them his grace, does not act merely as an arbitrary sovereign, but as a just judge, punishing them for their sin in abusing the blessings he has bestowed upon them, by judicially withdrawing the aids of his grace, and withholding farther influences. And sure he may punish obstinate sinners with privative as well as positive punishment! he may as justly

withhold or withdraw forfeited blessings, as inflict positive misery. This we all own he may do with respect to temporal blessings; he may justly deny them to such as have forfeited them; and why he may not exercise the same sovereignty and justice with regard to spiritual blessings is hard to say. His hardening, the heart, blinding the eyes, &c. of sinners, signify his withdrawing the influences of grace which they have abused, his withholding those additional influences which might irresistibly subdue their obstinacy, and his suffering them to fall into circumstances of temptation. These passages do but strongly and emphatically express thus much: thus much they may mean, without casting any injurious reflections upon God; and less than this they cannot mean, unless we would explain away their meaning.

From the whole then, we find that the doctrine of the reality and necessity of divine influences to render the administrations of the gospel effectual for saving purposes, is a doctrine familiar to the sacred oracles. This will receive additional confirmation, if we find it agreeable to matter of fact: Which leads me to observe,

III. That the different success of the same means of grace in different periods of the church, sufficiently shews the necessity of gracious assistances to render them efficacious. The various states of the church in various ages are but comments upon the sacred pages, and accomplishments of scripture.

Now we find that religion has flourished or declined, not so much according to external means, as according to the degree of divine influence. Alas! what could Noah, that zealous preacher of righteousness do, during the 120 years of his ministry? He might warn, he might persuade, he might weep over a secure world, in vain: they would rush upon destruction before his eyes; and he could only persuade his own family; and even among them there was a cursed Ham. How little could Moses the favourite messenger and intimate of God, prevail to make his people dutiful! Alas! after all the astonishing wonders he wrought before their eyes, they continued

obstinate and rebellious; *for the Lord had not given them an heart to understand,* &c. Deut. xxix. 4. This Moses mentions as what was beyond his power, and could be effected by omnipotence only. What inconsiderable success had that zealous prophet Elijah, the eloquent Isaiah, or that tender-hearted, mourning, weeping prophet Jeremiah! Surely, many feeble servants of Christ, in all respects inferior to them, have been crowned with more extensive success! Nay, when the Son of God descended from heaven a teacher to the world, who spake as never man spake, who carried omnipotence along with him to attest his doctrine by the most astonishing miracles, how few, during his life, were brought seriously to regard his doctrine! He was pleased to defer the remarkable effusion of his spirit till his return to his native heaven. And when it was poured out what a glorious alteration followed! then Peter, a poor fisherman, is the happy instrument of converting three thousand with one short sermon; which is more perhaps than his divine master had done by a hundred. Then, in spite of the united opposition of earth and hell, the humble doctrines of the cross triumphed over the nations, and subdued millions to the obedience of faith. Then the doctrines of Jesus, who was crucified at Jerusalem like an infamous malefactor, between two thieves, became the mighty, all-conquering weapons, through God, to demolish the strong-holds of Satan. 2 Cor. ii. 4. And whence this strange alteration? It was from the more abundant effusion of the Spirit upon the minds of men; upon their minds I say; for as to the external evidences from miracles, prophecies, &c. they were sufficiently clear before this happy season. But there was not the same degree of internal illumination by the Spirit. It is often intimated by Christ, in his last discourses with his disciples that the holy spirit was not yet given; and hence it was that he and they laboured so much in vain. But upon his ascension he performed the promise he had so often repeated, and sent the Spirit both upon them and their hearers; and then the aspect of affairs was happily al-

tered: then the word had free course, and was glorified. Then the world was *convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.*

This point might be illustrated farther by a history of the various periods of the church from the apostolic age to the present time; but it would be too tedious; and what has been offered is sufficient to convince us that it is not by power, nor by might, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, that the interests of religion are carried on, Zech iv. 6.; especially if we add,

IV. Our own experience and observation, which furnish us with many instances in which this great truth has been exemplified.

Our observation furnishes us with such instances as these:—Sometimes a minister who is an universal scholar, a masterly reasoner, and an accomplished orator, and withal sincerely engaged for the conversion of sinners, labours in vain, and all his excellent discourses seem to have no effect; while another of much inferior accomplisments is the successful instrument of turning many to righteousness. This cannot be accounted for without ascribing the distinction to the peculiar concurrence of divine grace; for if it depended upon the instruments, it would be quite the reverse. Sometimes a clear convictive and withal solemn and warm discourse has no effect; while at another time the same doctrines, delivered in a weak, incoherent manner, have strange efficacy, and reach the heart. Sometimes the reading of a sermon has been the means of awakening careless sinners, when at other times the most solemn and argumentative preaching has been in vain. Sometimes we have seen a number of sinners thoroughly awakened, and brought to seek the Lord in earnest; while another number, under the very same sermon, and who seemed as open to conviction as the former, or perhaps more so, have remained secure and thoughtless, as usual. And whence could this difference arise but from special grace? We have seen persons struck to the heart with those doctrines which they had heard an hundred times without any effect. And indeed there is something in

the manner of persons being affected with the word, which shews that the impression is not made by the word itself, or by any other power than divine. The truths that make such deep impressions upon their hearts are no new disoveries; they are the old common repeated truths of the gospel, which they had heard before a thousand times; and the manner in which they are represented by the minister may not be clearer than usual. But to their surprise, these familiar doctrines flash upon them as new discoveries; they appear to them in a quite different light, as though they had never heard them before: and they reach the conscience, and pierce the heart with such amazing energy, that the sinner is cast into a consternation at his own stupidity, that he never had such apprehensions of things before. He was wont to regard the word as a speculation, or a pleasing song, but now he finds it living and powerful, &c.: the secrets of his heart are laid open by it, and he is obliged to own that God is with it of a truth. Thus a believer also discerns the doctrines of the gospel in a quite different light at one time than at another: he sees new glories in them. Hence one sermon leaves him cold and hard-hearted, while another, no better in itself, sets him all on fire. Hence also one receives advantage from a discourse which had no effect upon another: and from this proceeds the difference in judgment about the excellency of sermons, which we may observe among Christians. Every one forms a judgment according to his own sensations, and not according to the discourse in itself. And indeed when we hear an exercised Christian expatiate in praise of a discourse, it is a happy sign that it was made of special service to him.

Many such instances as these familiarly occur in the sphere of our observation; which prove by matters of fact, that the success of the gospel depends upon the influence of divine grace. But we need not look about us to observe others. Turn your eyes inward upon what has passed in your own minds, and you shall find, that

Your own experience proves the same thing. Have you not found that the very same things have very

different effects upon you at different times? Those truths, which at one time leave you dull and sleepy, at other times quicken all your powers to the most vigorous exercise. Sinners, do you not return from the house of God in very different frames, though the service there has been substantially the same? At one time you sweat and agonize under a sense of guilt, and make many resolutions to change your course of life; and at another time there is a stupid calm within, and you matter not all the concerns of eternity. Some indeed have lain so long under the rays of the Sun of righteousness, that they are hardened, like clay, and hardly susceptive of any deep impressions at any time, after they have murdered their conscience, and silenced all its first remonstrances. These may go on serene and placid, till the flames of hell give them sensation; and this is most likely to be their doom; though it is not impossible but that this gospel, this stale, neglected gospel, which now makes no impression on their stony hearts, may yet be endowed with almighty power to break them into the tenderest contrition: and I pray God this may be the happy event. I pray God, O sinner, that thou mayest yet fall under the resistless energy of those important things which now appear but trifles to thee. But till persons are thus become proof against the gospel, they generally feel a variety of dispositions under the ministry of it; and this variety is to be principally ascribed to the various degrees of divine influence upon them at different seasons. And you saints, you also experience a like visisitude. Sometimes, O how divinely sweet, O how nourishing is the sincere milk of the word! How does the word enlighten, quicken, and comfort you! how exactly it suits your very case! At other times it is tasteless; it is a dead letter, and has no effect upon you. At times a sentence seems almighty, and carries all before it; and you feel it to be the word of God; at other times, you perceive only your feeble fellow-mortal speaking to you, and all his words are but feeble breath; as different from the former as chaff from wheat. See Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. Your own memories can supply my deficiency under this

head, by recollecting such instances as these perhaps during your whole life; and the time urges me to make some remarks upon what has been said. These are so numerous and copious, that though I had them principally in view, and chose this subject for the sake of them, yet I can but superficially touch upon them.

Hence we learn,

1. How essential and important the doctrine of divine influence is to the church of God. The very life, and the whole success of the gospel depend upon it. And since this necessarily supposes the utter depravity and spiritual impotence of human nature in its fallen state, that doctrine also must be frequently and plainly inculcated.

Alas! the great defect of the system of divinity too fashionable in our days, and one great cause of the languishing state of religion in our age, and of the prevalency of vice and impiety! Since it has been the mode to compliment mankind as able to do something very considerable in religion, religion has died away. Since it has been the fashion to press a reformation of mens lives, without inculcating the absolute necessity of divine grace to renew their nature, there is hardly such a thing as a thorough reformation to be seen; but mankind are evidently growing worse and worse. Since men think they can do something, and scorn to be wholly dependant on divine grace, the Lord, as it were, looks on, and suffers them to make the experiment; and alas! it is likely to be a costly experiment to multitudes. God withholds his influence in just displeasure, and lets them try what mighty things the boasted powers of degenerate nature can do without it; and hence, alas! they lie all secure and asleep in sin together. Sermons are preached; the house of God is frequented; the ordinances of the gospel administered; yet vice is triumphant; carnal security almost universal; and, so few are earnestly seeking after religion, that one would hardly suspect from the success, that these are intended as means to bring them to this. Thus alas! it is around us, if we believe our senses: and thus it will continue to be, till ministers

and people are brought to the dust before God, to acknowledge their own weakness, and entire dependence upon him. Therefore, hence we learn,

2. That when we enjoy the ministrations of the gospel in the greatest purity and plenty, we should not place our trust upon them, but wholly depend on the influence of divine grace for the success. We are apt to think, if we had but such a minister among us, how much good would be done! It is true, that faithful and accomplished ministers are singular blessings to the places where they labour, because it is by their instrumentality that the Lord is wont to work: but still let us remember, that even a Paul or an Apollos is nothing, unless the Lord give the increase. One text of scripture, one sentence will do more execution, when enforced by divine energy, than all the labours of the ablest ministers upon earth without it. For this divine energy therefore let us look; for this let us cry, *cursed be the man that trusteth in man*, &c. When we depend upon the instruments, we provoke the Spirit of God to leave us. If we are fond of taking ministers in his stead, we shall make the trial, till they and we wither away for want of divine influences. This provokes the blessed Spirit to blast the gifts of his ministers, to suffer them to fall, or to remove them out of the way, when they are set up as his rivals, that their idolaters may see they are but men. This provokes him to leave the hearers fruitless under the best cultivations, till experience sadly convinces them that they can do nothing without him. Therefore let not ministers trust in their own abilities, nor people in their labours; but all in the Lord.

That we should ascribe all the success of the gospel to God alone, and not sacrilegiously divide the honour of it between him and the instruments of it, or between him and ourselves, the ministers of Christ are ready to answer you, in the language of Peter, If we be examined of the good deed done to impotent sinners, by what means they are made whole; be it known unto you, that by the name of Jesus do they stand whole before you. Acts iv. 9, 10. Why do ye look

so earnestly upon us, as if by our own power or holiness we had done this! chap. iii. 12. It is a very shocking compliment to them to be accounted the authors of your faith. Good ministers love to be humble, to lie in their proper sphere, and would have God to have all the glory, as the great efficient; and when we ascribe the work of God to the instrument, we provoke him to withdraw his influence, that we may be convinced of the mistake. Let us also take care that we do not assume the honour of the work to ourselves. Alas! we had no hand in it, but opposed it with all our might; and therefore, *not unto us*, &c. Psal. cxv. 1. The Lord hath done great things for us in this place, for which we are glad. One can name one, and another another as his spiritual father, or the helper of his faith; but still remember, these only planted or watered; but it was God that gave the increase: and therefore to him alone ascribe his own work.

3. Hence also we may learn, whither we should look for grace to render the gospel successful among us.

Let us look up to God. Saints, apply to him for his influences to quicken your graces, and animate you in your christian course. Sinners, cry to him for his grace to renew your nature and sanctify you. Not all the men, nor all the means upon earth, can be of any service to you without him. Carefully attend upon the gospel, and all its institutions; but still be sensible, that these alone will not do; more is necessary; even the supernatural agency of divine grace.

How dangerous a thing it is to grieve the Spirit, and cause him to withdraw! In that cursed moment when a sinner has quenched the Spirit, all the means of grace become useless to him. Our salvation depends entirely upon the divine agency; and therefore to forfeit this, is to cut ourselves off from all hope. Let us then indulge every good motion, entertain every solemn thought, cherish every pious resolution, and so, as it were, invite the blessed agent to accomplish his work, instead of provoking him to leave us.

Alas! how natural is it for mankind to resist him! how averse are they to indulge his motions, and submit to his operations! And are not some of you guilty in this respect?

4. We observe that whatever excellent outward means and privileges a church enjoys, it is in a most miserable condition, if the Lord has withdrawn his influences from it: and whether this be not too much our own condition, I leave you to judge Some of you, I doubt not, are even now, when others are withering around you, flourishing in the courts of the Lord, and feel the dews of heaven upon you: such I heartily congratulate. But in general, it is evident that a contagious lukewarmness and carnal security have spread themselves among us. Matters would not be thus still and quiet, if there was any considerable number of sinners among us anxiously seeking after salvation. The violence of their concern would constrain them to unbosom themselves to their minister, and to Christians around them. Our public assemblies would not wear so stupid and unconcerned an aspect, were they generally pricked to the heart. And what is the cause of this declension? Why, the Lord denies the increase: the Lord withholds his influence. This complaint is become fashionable among us, and often upon our lips; but pray consider what you say when you utter this complaint. And is the Lord indeed withdrawn from us? Then all is gone; then saints may languish, and sinners may perish; and there is no remedy. We may indeed have preaching, sacraments, societies, &c. but alas! what will all these avail, if God deny the increase! they will not save one soul; nay, they will but aggravate our condemnation. Let sinners take the alarm, and consider how sad their case is, who have outlived the season of remarkable divine influences! The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and you are not saved; and what do you think will become of you? How poor a chance, if I may so speak, have you for life, when the Spirit is thus restrained! You hardly know one careless sinner, in the compass of your knowledge,

that has been made seriously religious, within these two or three years. If men were pressing into the kingdom of heaven, you might be helped forward, as it were, in the crowd; but now all lies as a dead weight against you, and is it not time for you to cry mightily to God that he would pour out his Spirit upon you!

SERMON LVIII.

The Rejection of Gospel-Light the Condemnation of Men.

JOHN iii. 19.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light; because [or *for*] *their deeds are evil.*

WHAT a strange alarming declaration is this! *Light is come into the world:* the Sun of righteousness is risen upon this region of darkness; therefore it is enlightened; therefore it is bright intellectual day with all its rational inhabitants; therefore they will no longer groupe and stumble in darkness, but all find their way into the world of eternal light and glory. These would be natural inferences: this event we would be apt to expect from the entrance of light into the world. But hear and tremble, ye inhabitants of the enlightened parts of the earth! hear and tremble, ye sons of Nassau-Hall, and inhabitants of Princeton! The benevolent Jesus, the Friend of human nature, the Saviour of men, whose lips never dropped an over-severe word, or gave a false alarm; Jesus himself proclaims, *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world,* &c.

This is the condemnation; that is, This is the great occasion of more aggravated condemnation at the final judgment and of more severe and terrible punishment in the eternal world; or, this is the cause of men's condemning themselves even now at the bar of their own consciences.

That light is come into the world—Jesus, the Sun of the moral world, is risen, and darts his beams around him in the gospel. And this furnishes guilty minds with materials for self-condemnation; and their obstinate resistance of the light inhances their guilt, and will render their condemnation the more aggravated; and the reason is, that

Men love darkness rather than light. They choose ignorance rather than knowledge! The Sun of righteousness is not agreeable to them, but shines as a baleful ill-boding luminary. If they did but love the light, its entrance into the world would be their salvation; but now it is their condemnation. But why do they hate the light? Truly, light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to the eyes to see the sun: and no light so sweet as this from heaven: no sun so bright and reviving as the Sun of righteousness: and why then do they not love it? Alas! there is no reason for it, but this wretched one,

Because their deeds are evil. And evil deeds always excite uneasiness in the light, and afford the conscience matter of self-accusation, therefore they wrap up themselves in darkness, and avoid the painful discoveries of the light.

The text directs us to the following inquiries:

What is that light which is come into the world? What is the darkness that is opposed to it? What are the evidences of mens loving darkness rather than light? What is the reason of it? And in what respects the light's coming into the world, and mens loving darkness rather than light, is their condemnation?

I. What is that light which is come into the world?

The answer to this, and the other questions, I shall endeavour to accommodate to our own times and circumstances, that we may the more readily apply it to ourselves.

The light of Reason entered our world as soon as the soul of man was created; and, though it is greatly obscured by the grand apostacy, yet some sparks of it still remain.

To supply its defects, the light of Revelation soon darted its beams through the clouds of ignorance, which involved the human mind, on its flying off to so great a distance from the Father of lights. This heavenly day began feebly to dawn upon the first pair of sinners, in that early promise concerning *the seed of the woman;* and it grew brighter and brighter in the successive revelations made to the patriarchs, to Moses, and the prophets, till at length the Messiah appeared,

as an illustrious sun after a gradual tedious twilight of the opening dawn.

The light of human literature has also come into the world, and shines with unusual splendors upon our age and nation; and lo! it illuminates this little village, and extends its beams through the land.

But it is not light in any of these senses that our Lord principally intends, but himself and his blessed gospel; a more clear and divine light than any of the former.

He often represents himself under the strong and agreeable metaphor of light. *I am the light of the world*, says he: *he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness.* John viii. 12. *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me, should not abide in darkness.* John xii. 46. Light is a strong and beautiful metaphor for knowledge, prosperity, comfort, and happiness; and these are the rays which the blessed Jesus diffuses around him:—but, wherever he does not shine, all is sullen and dismal darkness. Hell is *the blackness of darkness for ever*, because he does not extend to it the light of his countenance. That country where he does not shine, is *the land of darkness and the shadow of death;* and that heart which is not illuminated with *the light of the knowledge of his glory*, is the gloomy dungeon of infernal spirits; but wherever he shines, there is intellectual day, the bright meridian of glory and blessedness.

His gospel also is frequently represented as a great light; and no metaphor was ever used with more emphasis and propriety. It is the medium through which we discover the glory of the Deity, the beauties of holiness, the evil of sin, and the reality and infinite importance of eternal invisible things. This is the light that reveals the secrets of the heart, and discovers ourselves to ourselves. It is this that gives us a just and full view of our duty to God and man, which is but imperfectly or falsly represented in every other system of religion and morality in the world. It is this that discovers and ascertains a method in which rebels may be reconciled to their offended Sovereign, and exhibits a Saviour in full view to perishing sinners. Hail! sa-

cred heaven-born light! welcome to our eyes, thou brightest and fairest effulgence of the divine perfections! May *this day-spring from on high*, visit all the regions of this benighted world, and overwhelm it as with a deluge of celestial light! Blessed be God its vital rays have reached to us in these ends of the earth: and if any of us remain ignorant of the important discoveries it makes, it is *because we love darkness rather than light!* Which leads me to inquire,

II. What is that darkness that is opposed to this heavenly light?

Darkness is a word of gloomy import; and there is hardly any thing dismal or destructive, but what is expressed by it in sacred language. But the precise sense of the word in my text, is, a state of ignorance, and the absence of the means of conviction. *Men love darkness rather than light;* that is, they choose to be ignorant, rather than well-informed; ignorant particularly of such things as will give them uneasiness to know; as their sin, and the danger to which it exposes them. They are wilfully ignorant: and hence they hate the means that would alarm them with the mortifying discovery. They would rather be flattered than told the honest truth, and know their own character and condition: and hence they shut their eyes against the light of the gospel, that would flash the painful conviction upon them. Though the light of the gospel shines round you, yet are not some of you involved in this darkness? This you may know by the next inquiry.

III. What are the evidences of mens loving darkness rather than light?

The general evidence, which comprehends all the rest, is their avoiding the means of conviction, and using all the artifices in their power to render them ineffectual.

It is not impossible to characterize such of you as *love darkness rather than light*, though you may be so much upon your guard against the discovery, as not to perceive your own character.

Though you may have a turn for speculation, and perhaps delight in every other branch of knowledge,

yet the knowledge of yourselves, the knowledge of disagreeable duties, the discovery of your sin and danger, of your miserable condition as under the condemnation of the divine law, this kind of self-knowledge you carefully shun; and, when it irresistibly flashes upon you, you endeavour to shut up all the avenues of your mind, through which it might break upon you, and you avoid those means of conviction, from which it proceeds.

You set yourselves upon an attempt very preposterous and absurd in a rational being, and that is, Not to think. When the ill-boding surmise rises within, "All is not well: I am not prepared for the eternal world: if I should die in this condition I am undone for ever:" I say, when conscience thus whispers your doom, it may make you sad and pensive for a minute or two, but you soon forget it: you designedly labour to cast it out of your thoughts, and to recover your former negligent serenity. The light of coviction is a painful glare to a guilty eye; and you wrap up yourselves in darkness, lest it should break in upon you.

When your thoughts are like to fix upon this ungrateful subject, do you not labour to divert them into another channel? You immerse yourselves in business, you mingle in company, you indulge and cherish a thoughtless levity of mind, you break out of retirement into the wide world, that theatre of folly, trifling, and dissipation; and all this to scatter the gloom of conviction that hangs over your ill-boding minds, and silence the clamours of an exasperated conscience! You laugh, or talk, or work, or study away these fits of seriousness! You endeavour to prejudice yourselves against them by giving them ill names; as Melancholy, Spleen, and I know not what! whereas they are indeed the honest struggles of an oppressed conscience to obtain a fair hearing, and give you faithful warning of approaching ruin: they are the benevolent efforts of the Spirit of grace to save a lost soul. And O! it would be happy for you if you had yielded to them, and cherished the serious hour!

For the same reason also, you love a soft representation of christianity, as an easy indolent inactive thing;

requiring no vigorous exertion, and attended with no dubious conflict, but encouraging your hopes of heaven in a course of sloth, carelessness, and indulgence. Those are the favourite sermons and favourite books which flatter you with smooth things, putting the most favourable construction upon your wickedness, and representing the way to heaven as smooth and easy.

Or if you have an unaccountable fondness for faithful and alarming preaching, as it must be owned some self-flatterers have, it is not with a view to apply it to yourselves, but to others. If you love the light, it is not that you may see yourselves, but other objects: and, whenever it forces upon you a glance of yourselves, you immediately turn from it, and hate it.

Hatred of the light, perhaps, is the reason why so many among us are so impatient of public worship; so fond of their own homes on the sacred hours consecrated to divine service; and so reluctant, so late, or so inconstant in their attendance. It is darkness perhaps, at home; but the house of God is filled with light, which they do not love.

This also is one reason why the conversation of zealous communicative christians, who are not ashamed to talk of what lies nearest their hearts, I mean their Religion, their Saviour, and their God, and to express an abhorrence of what they so sincerely hate, I mean the vices of mankind, and every appearance of evil; I say, this is one reason why their conversation is such a heavy burden, such a painful restraint to many. Such men reflect the beams of the Sun of righteousness, and the beauties of holiness all around them:—they carry light with them whithersoever they go, and strike conviction to the guilty. The strictness, the warm devotion and spirituality of their lives pass a sentence of condemnation upon sinners; a sentence which they cannot but feel, and which therefore renders them uneasy. Hence it is that such lively and circumspect christians are not at all popular in the world; but the favourites of the world are your pliable, temporizing, complaisant christians, that never carry their religion with them into polite company, but conform themselves to the taste of those they converse with. These give

no man's conscience uneasiness, they reflect no heavenly light, but thicken the darkness of every company in which they appear; therefore, they are acceptable to the lovers of darkness.

Another expedient that has been often used, and which some of you perhaps have attempted, to avoid the light, is, to endeavour to work up yourselves to a disbelief of the christian revelation. If you could banish that heavenly light out of the world, or substitute darkness in its place, then you might perpetrate the works of darkness with more confidence and licentiousness. Therefore, you eagerly listen to the laughs, the jeers, the railleries, and sophisms of loose wits against it; and you are afraid to give a fair hearing to the many satisfactory evidences in its favour. Thus, you cherish that hideous monster, Infidelity; your own offspring, not Satan's, though the father of lies; for he *believes and trembles*, James ii. 19.

These artifices, and the like, are the effects, and consequently the evidences and indications of mens loving darkness rather than light. And, instead of a larger illustration, I shall conclude this head with a plain honest appeal to my hearers.

As in the presence of the heart-searching God, I solemnly appeal to your consciences, whether you do not deal partially with yourselves, and refuse pursuing those hints of your dangerous condition till you make a full discovery? Do not your hearts smite you, because you have suppressed evidence, when it was against you, and shut your eyes against conviction? When the glass of the divine law has been held up before you, and shewn you your own hideous image, have you not gone away, and soon *forgot what manner of men you were?* Do you not know in your consciences, that the hopes you entertain of future happiness are not the result of severe repeated trial, but, on the other hand, owe their strength and even their being to a superficial examination, or none at all, to blind self-flattery, and excessive self-love, which tempt you to believe things as you would have them? Is it censoriousness, or is it evidence and faithfulness, that constrains me to cry out, O! how rare are well-grounded, well-

attested hopes among us! Hopes that have not been slightly entertained, nor retained without good evidence, after impartial repeated trials; hopes that have risen and fallen, gathered strength or languished, been embraced or abandoned, perhaps a thousand times, according to the various degrees of evidence; and after a series of such vicissitudes, attended with a variety of correspondent passions, of joys and fears, of discouraging anxieties and transporting prospects, have at length arrived at a settled confirmed state, supported by that only sufficient proof, conspicuous holiness of heart and life. For the decision of this important doubt, I appeal from my own judgment, from the judgment of a censorious spirit and a blind charity, from every judgment but that of your own hearts: at that tribunal I lodge the appeal; and there I insist the matter should be tried. And remember this, *If your hearts condemn you*, much more does God, the supreme Judge: for *he is greater than your hearts, and knoweth all things;* knoweth many causes of condemnation, unknown and perhaps unsuspected by you. But, *brethren, if your hearts condemn you not, then you have confidence towards God,* 1 John iii. 20, 21. I proceed to inquire,

IV. What is the reason of this absurd preference, that *men love darkness rather than light?*

The melancholy reason of this is easily discovered, and has been partly anticipated; and it is this, that men love ease and security of mind, rather than fear and anxiety. They are really obnoxious sinners, under the terrible displeasure of almighty God, and on the slippery brink of everlasting destruction. Now, to have a full conviction of this would alarm their fears, imbitter their pleasures, damp their eager pursuits, and cast their minds into a ferment of anxiety and terror. But to be blind to all these miserable prospects, to be elated with sanguine expectations of the contrary, to have all serene and calm within, to be charmed with all the fine chimeras of a flattering imagination; to be fearless of danger, and pleased with themselves; this is a state they naturally delight in: in this state they will lull themselves asleep at all adven-

tures, regardless of the consequence; and as darkness is the most proper attendant of sleep, therefore they choose it. But the light of the gospel let into the conscience would give them quite another view of things, would overturn all their towering hopes, and set the terrors of the Lord in array against them; would open such shocking prospects in the ways of sin, that they could no longer dare to walk in them; would constrain them to indulge the sorrows of a broken heart, and to long, and pant, and look, and cry for a Saviour. This would be a very painful exercise to them; and therefore they hate and shun the light, which would force the unwelcome conviction upon them.

This is the reason which Christ himself assigns for some mens loving darkness rather than light. *Every one that doth the truth cometh unto the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.* Such a one is willing to be searched: the presumption is in his favour, and the trial will turn out to his honour. *But he that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, lest his evil deeds should be reproved,* John iii. 20, 21. It is the fear of this reproof that makes him afraid of the light; for he cannot but be conscious that his evil deeds deserve it: and to be thus reproved, will yield him pain.

"But since they have such favourable thoughts of themselves, and entertain such high hopes, why are they afraid of the light? must they not rather presume its discoveries will be in their favour? And if so, why do they hate it? I answer, that, notwithstanding all their high sentiments of themselves, they have often a secret suspicion they are not well grounded, and that the light would make some terrible discoveries concerning them; and hence they will not venture to trust themselves in the light, lest their secret suspicion should be confirmed, and rise into a full conviction. It is really so evident that they are guilty unholy creatures, unfit for heaven, and their consciences sometimes give them such hints of this alarming secret, that they cannot keep themselves altogether ignorant of it. They therefore try to evade the trial, lest the sentence should go

against them. I appeal to your own breasts, my brethren, whether this be not the true reason why you are so unwilling to examine yourselves, and submit to the severe scrutiny of the light of revelation? why you are averse to self-knowledge, and the means that would obtrude it upon you? Is it not because you cannot but prejudge the matter even against yourselves, in spite of all the arts of self-flattery? And if there are such strong presumptions against you, that even yourselves cannot but dread a trial at the tribunal of your consciences, is it not evident, that chosen darkness is your only guard against conviction, and that your case is really bad? And if so, how sorry a relief is it to avoid the discovery! since all your preposterous care to avoid it will but aggravate your condemnation! Which naturally introduces the last inquiry:

V. In what respects the light's coming into the world, and mens loving darkness rather than light, is their condemnation?

Here I have only to illustrate two particulars already hinted; that this furnishes them with matter for self-condemnation now, and will be the occasion of their more aggravated condemnation in the eternal world.

I. This furnishes them with matter of self-condemnation in the present state. It is hard, perhaps impossible, for sinners under the meridian light of the gospel, to avoid all conviction of their guilt and danger. That light is very penetrating, and will dart its rays through the thickest glooms of ignorance: *It is vital and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword; piercing and dividing asunder the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*, Heb. iv. 12. Such of you, my brethren, as are resolved to shun the mortification of self-knowledge, live in a situation very unfavourable to your design. You have had "burning and shining lights" among you*; who, I doubt not, *shine as the sun, and as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever;* but, when they are translated to a higher sphere,

* Mr. Burr and Mr. Edwards, Presidents of the College at Nassau-Hall, before Mr. Davies.

the gospel has not left you, but still shines around you; and you will find it very difficult, I hope, impossible, to wrap up yourselves in Egyptian darkness in such a Goshen, such a land of vision. In Tartary or Japan, or some savage region of darkness, you might have lived in contented ignorance, and avoided those unacceptable glares of light which now will break in upon you, in spite of all your vigilance; for under the faithful and solemn preaching of the gospel, your consciences will often be disturbed, and you will find yourselves unable to go on in sin bold and intrepid. And though, in the thoughtless gaiety of health, and the hurry and din of business, you may drown the clamours of conscience, yet in a retired hour, upon a sick bed, and in the near views of death and eternity, conscience will speak, and constrain you to hear: and thus you will live unhappy self-condemned creatures in this world, till you are condemned by the righteous sentence of God in the world to come. Therefore consider,

II. Your loving darkness rather than light, will occasion your more aggravated condemnation in the eternal world. It was in your power to receive warning, and discover your danger in time; nay, it cost you some pains to avoid the discovery, and make light of the warning. And what a fruitful source of self-tormenting reflections will this be! How will you fret, and vex, and accuse, and condemn yourselves, for acting so foolish a part! How will you exhaust and spend yourselves in eager fruitless wishes, that you had admitted conviction while the danger was avoidable! But, O! it will then be too late! Hell is a region of darkness too, but not of that soothing peaceful darkness of ignorance, which you now prefer to the light of the gospel, but a lowring, tremendous, tormenting darkness, that will for ever hide every bright and pleasing prospect from your eyes, and yet be the proper medium for discovering sights of woe and terror: a thick darkness, occasioned by the everlasting eclipse of the Sun of righteousness and the light of God's countenance, who will never dart one ray of comfort or of hope through the sullen gloom. In this black-

ness of darkness you must dwell for ever, who now love darkness rather than light. And, O! how will your consciences haunt and terrify you, in that cheerless and stormy night! Your guilt will also appear great in the sight of God, as well as to your own consciences, and therefore he will inflict the greater punishment upon you. You have despised the richest blessings that even infinite goodness could bestow upon the children of men; I mean, his Gospel and his Son: you have made light of his authority in the most open and audacious manner. He knows you were even afraid to discover your duty towards him: he knows you would not regard your own consciences when they were his advocates, and that you were unwilling to admit so much conviction as would render you sorry for your offences against him. Nay, he knows that your being convinced that this or that was an offence against Him was no restraint to you from the commission of it. In short, he knows you spent your lives either in sinning against knowledge, or in avoiding that knowledge which would have prevented your sinning. And while he views you in this light, what obstinate, wilful, daring offenders must you appear in his eyes? And what aggravated punishment must he judge your due? He also knows you reluctated and struggled against your own salvation, and hated that light which would have shewn you the way to everlasting life. And must he not think you worthy of that destruction you have voluntarily chosen, and refuse you admittance to that happiness which you wilfully refused?

This is the representation which the scriptures uniformly give us of the doom of such as love darkness rather than light. *If I had not come and spoken to them*, says the blessed Jesus, *they would not have had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin*, John xv. 22. *It shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon*, though most notorious for all manner of wickedness and debauchery, *than for Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum*, in which Christ's mighty works were done, and the light of his gospel shone so bright, Matt. xi. 21, 24. And this is agreeable to the eternal rules of right-

eousness, that much should be required where much has been given; and that the degree of guilt should be estimated by the degrees of obligation and advantages for obedience.

And now, my dear hearers, upon a review of this subject, you see your own circumstances; the light is come among you; it shines all around you; and, I doubt not but at times it finds some openings through which it forces its way even into unwilling minds. You have light to distinguish between truth and error; between sin and duty; between the way to heaven, and the way to hell: you are warned, admonished, and instructed: you have the strongest inducements to a life of religion, and the strongest dissuasives from a course of sin. I leave you therefore to determine what your guilt and punishment must be, if you choose darkness rather than light; light so clear, so reviving, so salutary, so divine!

This alarming subject is very pertinent to us all, and we should all apply it to ourselves; but it is so peculiarly adapted to the residents of this house, that I cannot but direct my address particularly to you, my dear pupils, who are the children of the light in more respects than one.

There is not one in a thousand of the sons of men that enjoys your advantages. Light, human and divine, natural and supernatural, ancient and modern; that is, Knowledge of every kind shines upon you, and you are every day basking under its rays. You have nothing to do but to polish your minds, and, as it were, render them luminous. But let me put you in mind, that, unless you admit the light of the glorious gospel of Christ to shine in your hearts, you will still be the children of darkness, and confined in the blackness of darkness for ever. This is intolerably shocking, even in supposition. Suppose any of you should be surrounded with more light than others, for no other purpose but that you may have a stronger conflict with conviction, and that your consciences may with greater force raise tumults and insurrections within you; suppose your sins should be the sins of men of learning and knowledge, the most daring and

gigantic sins on this side hell; suppose you should turn out sinners of great parts, fine geniuses, like the fallen angels, those vast intellects; wise, but wicked; wise to do evil, but without knowledge to do good; suppose it should be your highest character that you can harangue well, that you know a few dead languages, that you have passed through a course of philosophy; but as to that knowledge which sanctifies all the rest, and renders them useful to yourselves or others; that knowledge, which alone can make you wise to salvation, and guide you to avoid the paths of destruction, you shun it, you hate it, and choose to remain contentedly ignorant in this important respect; suppose your parents, who have been at the expence of your education; your friends, who have entertained such high and pleasing expectations concerning you; church and state, that look to you for help, and depend upon you to fill stations of importance in the world, and your careful instructors, who observe your growing improvements with proportional pleasure;—suppose, that, after all this generous labour, and all these pleasing prospects, they should see you at last doomed to everlasting darkness, for your voluntary abuse of the light you now enjoy;—suppose these things, and—— but the consequences of these suppositions are so terrible, that I am not hardy enough to mention them. And, O! shall they ever become matters of fact?

Therefore, my dear youth, admit the light, love it, and pursue it, though at first it should make such discoveries as may be painful to you; for the pain will prove medicinal. By discovering your danger in time, you may be able to escape it; but never expect to remove it by the silly expedient of shutting your eyes. Be impartial inquirers after truth as to yourselves, as well as other things, and no longer attempt to put a cheat upon yourselves. Alas! how childish and foolish, as well as wicked and ruinous, would such an imposture be! The gospel, in this particular, only requires you to be honest men; and surely this is a most moderate and reasonable demand. Therefore, be ye

children of the light, and of the day, and walk as such, and then it will be a blessing to the world and to yourselves, that ever you were born.

Finally, Let us all remember the terror of this friendly warning, *That this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*

SERMON LIX.

A New-Year's Gift.

ROM. xiii. 11.

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*

TIME, like an ever-running stream, is perpetually gliding on, and hurrying us and all the sons of men into the boundless ocean of eternity. We are now entering upon one of those imaginary lines of division, which men have drawn to measure out time for their own conveniency; and, while we stand upon the threshhold of a new year, it becomes us to make a solemn contemplative pause; though time can make no pause, but rushes on with its usual velocity. Let us take some suitable reviews and prospects of time past and future, and indulge such reflections as our transition from year to year naturally tends to suggest.

The grand and leading reflection is that in the text, with which I present you as a New-Year's Gift; *Knowing the time, that it is now high time to awake out of sleep.*

The connection of our text is this:—the apostle having enjoined sundry duties of religion and morality, subjoins this consideration, namely, that the time remarkably required them; as if he should say, Be subject to magistrates, and love one another, and that the rather, knowing the time, that it is now high time, or the proper hour†, to awake out of sleep. A sleepy negligence as to these things is peculiarly unseasonable at such a time as this.

The Romans, to whom this epistle was written, were

* This Sermon is dated Nassau-Hall, Jan. 1, 1760.

† ὥρα.

christians indeed, in the judgment of charity: they were such, whose salvation the apostle could point at as near approaching; *Now*, says he, *is your salvation nearer than when you believed:* And yet he calls even upon such to awake out of sleep. Even sincere christians are too often apt to fall into negligence and security; they contract an indolent, dull, lazy temper, as to the duties of religion and divine things: sometimes their love languishes, their zeal cools, and they become remiss or formal in their devotions. Now such a state of dulness and inactivity is often represented by the metaphor Sleep; because as Sleep disables us from natural actions, and blunts our animal senses, so this spiritual sleep indisposes the soul for the service of God and spiritual sensations.

Hence it follows, that to *awake out of sleep*, signifies to rouse out of carnal security, to shake off spiritual sloth, and to engage in the concerns of religion with vigour and full exertion, like men awake.

And as even christians are too often liable to fall into some degrees of spiritual sleep, as they often nod and slumber over the great concerns of religion, which demand the utmost exertion of all their powers, notwithstanding the principle of divine life implanted in them, there is great need to call even upon them to awake. Thus the apostle rouses the Roman christians, including himself among them, as standing in need of the same excitation. *It is high time* for us, says he; that is, for you and me, *to awake out of sleep.*

This is a duty proper at all times. There is not one moment of time in which a christian may lawfully and safely be secure and negligent. Yet the apostle intimates, that some particular times call for peculiar vigilance and activity; and that to sleep at such times is a sin peculiarly aggravated. *Now*, says he, *it is high time* for us *to awake out of sleep:* this is not a time for us to sleep: this time calls upon us to rouse and exert ourselves, this is the hour for action: we have slept too long already: now let us rouse and rise.

The apostle also intimates, that the serious consideration and right knowledge of time, is a strong excitement to awake out of sleep. *Knowing the time,*

says he, *that now it is high time to awake out of sleep;* that is, your knowing and seriously considering the importance, the uncertainty, and the shortness of time in general, and the peculiar circumstances of the present time in particular, may be sufficient to rouse you. Natural sleep should be in its season: *They that sleep, sleep in the night. But*, says he, *we are all the children of the light, and the children of the day. We are brought out of darkness into the glorious light of the gospel;* therefore let us not sleep, as do others. Consider the time, that it is day-light with you; and you cannot but be sensible that it is now high time for us to awake out of sleep: this is the hour to rise. Therefore let us awake to righteousness.

The reasons the apostle urges upon the Roman christians to awake at that time, is very strong and moving: it is this; *Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.* Salvation is hastening quick towards us upon the wings of time. As many years as are past since we first believed in Christ, by so many years nearer is our salvation: Or, as he expresses it in the next verse, *The night is far spent, the day is at hand.* The gloomy turbulent night of the present state is near over; the dawn of eternal day is just ready to open upon us; and can we sleep at such a time? What sleep on the very threshhold of heaven! sleep, when salvation is just ready to embrace us! sleep when the dawn of celestial day is just about shining around us! Is it possible we should sleep at such a time? Must not the prospect of everlasting salvation so near us, the thought that in a very little time we shall be in heaven, rouse us, and fix us in a posture of eager expectation and constant watchfulness?

The text implies, that christians should always be growing in grace; and that the nearer their salvation is, the more lively and zealous should they be; and since it is nearer this year than the last, they ought to be more holy this year than the last. The nearer they are to heaven, the more heavenly they should be. The approach of salvation is a strong motive to holiness; and the stronger by how much the nearer it is.

My chief design at present is to lead you to know the time, and to make such reflections upon it as its nature and circumstances require, and as are suited to our respective conditions.

The first thing I would set you upon, as a necessary introduction to all the rest, is the important but neglected duty of self-examination. Methinks it may shock a man to enter upon a new year without knowing whether he shall be in heaven or hell before the end of it: and that man can give but a very poor account of the last year, and perhaps twenty or thirty years before it, that cannot yet give any satisfactory answer to this grand question. Time is given us to determine this interesting point, and to use proper means to determine it in our favour. Let us therefore resolve this day, that we will not live another year strangers to ourselves, and utterly uncertain what will become of us through an endless duration. This day let us put this question to our hearts? "What am I? Am I an humble dutiful servant of God? or am I a disobedient impenitent sinner? Am I a disciple of Christ in reality? or do I only wear his name, and make an empty profession of his religion? Whither am I bound? for heaven or hell? Which am I most fit for in temper? for the region of perfect holiness, or for that of sin and impurity? Is it not time this inquiry should be determined? Shall I stupidly delay the determination, till it be passed by the irrevocable sentence of the supreme Judge, before whom I may stand before this year is at a close? Alas! if it should then be against me, my doom will be remediless. But if I should now discover my case to be bad, blessed be God, it is not too late to alter it. I may yet obtain a good hope through grace, though my present hope should be found to be that of the hypocrite."

If we should push home this inquiry, it will probably discover two sorts of persons among us, to whom my text leads me particulary to address myself; the one, entirely destitute of true religion, and consequently altogether unprepared for a happy eternity; and yet careless and secure in that dangerous situation: the other, Christians indeed, and consequently

habitually prepared for their latter end; but criminally remiss or formal in the concerns of religion, and in the duties they owe to God and man. The one, sunk in a deep sleep in sin; the other nodding and slumbering, though upon the slippery brink of eternity. Now as to both these sorts of persons, it is high time for them to awake out of sleep. And this exhortation I would press upon them, first, by some general considerations common to both; and then, by some particular considerations proper to each respectively.

The general considerations are such as these:

I. Consider the uncertainty of time as to you. You may die the next year, the next month, the next week, the next hour, or the next moment. And I once knew a minister* who, while he was making this observation, was made a striking example of it, and instantly dropt down dead in the pulpit. When you look forward through the year now begun, you see what may never be your own. No, you cannot call one day of it your own. Before that day comes, you may have done with time, and be entered upon eternity. Men presume upon time, as if it was certainly entailed upon them for so many years; and this is the delusion that ruins multitudes. How many are now in eternity, who begun the last year with as little expectation of death, and as sanguine hopes of long life, as you have at the beginning of the present? And this may be your doom. Should a prophet instructed in the secret, open to you the book of the divine decrees, as Jeremiah did to Hananiah, some of you would no doubt see it written there, *this year thou shalt die.* Jer. xxviii. 16. Some unexpected moment in this year will put an end to all the labours and enjoyments of the present state, and all the duties and opportunities peculiar to it.

Therefore if sinners would repent and believe; if they would obtain the favour of God, and preparation for the heavenly state; and if saints would make high improvements in religion; if they would make their calling and election sure, that they may not stumble over

* The Rev. Mr. Conn of Bladensburgh, in Maryland.

doubts and fears into the presence of their Judge; if they would do any thing for the honour of God, and the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world; if they would be of service to their families, their friends, their country, and mankind in general, now is the time for them to awake out of sleep, and set about their respective work. Now is the time, because this is the only time they are certain of. Sinners! you may be in hell before this year finishes its round, if you delay the great business of religion any longer. And saints! if you neglect to improve the present time, you may be compelled to shoot the gulph of eternity, and launch away to unknown coasts, full of fears and perplexities; you may be cut off from all opportunities of doing service to God and mankind, of endeavouring to instil the principles of religious knowledge and practice into the minds of your dear children, and those under your care, unless you catch the present hour. For remember, time is uncertain. Youth, health, strength, business, riches, power, wisdom, and whatever this world contains, cannot ensure it. No, the thread of life is held by the divine hand alone; and God can snap it asunder, without warning, in whatever moment he pleases.

II. Consider the shortness of time as to you. Time, in its utmost extent, including what is past from the creation, and what is future to the conflagration, is nothing to eternity. But the time of your life is vastly shorter. That part of time which is parcelled out to you, is not only uncertain, but extremely short: it is uncertain when it will end, but it is absolutely certain it will end very soon. You cannot hope to surpass the common standard of long lives: and that is but seventy or eighty years. Nay, you have but very little reason to hope you shall arrive to this. The chance against it, if I may so speak, is at least ten to one; that is, there are at least ten that die on this side of seventy or eighty, for one that lives to that period: it is therefore far more likely that you will never spend seventy or eighty years upon earth. A shorter space than that will probably convey you from this world to heaven or hell. And is it not high time then for

you to awake out of sleep? Your work is great; your time is short: you have none to spare; none to trifle away: it is all little enough for the work you have to do.

III. Consider how much of your time has been lost and mispent already.

Some of you that are now the sincere servants of God, may recollect how late in life you engaged in his service; how long you stood idle in his vineyard, when his work was before you, and his wages in your offer. How many guilty days and years have you spent in the drudgery of sin, and in a base neglect of God and your immortal souls! Others of you, who have the noble pleasure of reflecting that you devoted yourselves to God early, in comparrison of others, are yet sensible how many days and years were lost before you made so wise a choice, lost in the sins and follies of childhood and youth. And the best of you have reason to lament how much precious time you have mispent even since you heartily engaged in the service of God; how many opportunities both of doing good to others, and receiving good yourselves, you have lost by your own carelessness. How many seasons for devotion have you neglected or misimproved! O! how little of your time has been devoted to God and the service of your souls! How much of it has been wasted upon trifles, or in an over-eager pursuit of this vain world? Does not the loss, upon the whole, amount to many days, and even years? And a day is no small loss to a creature, who has so few days at most to prepare for eternity.

As to many of you, is it not sadly evident you have lost all the days and years that have rolled over your heads? you have perhaps managed time well as to the purposes of the present life; but that is but the lowest and most insignificant use of it. Time is given as a space for repentance and preparation for eternity: But have you not entirely lost it, as to this grand use of it? Nay, are not your hearts more hard, and you less prepared for eternity now than you were some years ago? Have you not been heaping up the mountain of sin higher and higher every day, and estranging yourselves

from God more and more? To heighten the loss, you should consider it is irrecoverable. Nothing is more impossible than to recal past time. It is gone! it is gone for ever! Yesterday can no more return than the years before the flood. Power, wisdom, tears, intreaties, all the united efforts of the whole universe of creatures, can never cause it to return.

And is there so much of your time lost? lost beyond all possibility of recovery? And is it not high time for you to awake out of sleep? Have you any more precious time to throw away? Shall the time to come be abused and lost, like the past? Or will you not endeavour to redeem the time you have lost, in the only way in which it can be redeemed, that is, by doubling your industry in time to come? Much must now be done in a little time, since you have now but little left. You have indeed had 10, 20, 30, or 40 precious years; but alas! they are irrecoverably lost. And may not this thought startle you, and cause you to awake out of sleep? The loss of the same number of kingdoms would not be half so great. To a candidate for eternity, whose everlasting state depends upon the improvement of time, a year is of infinitely greater importance than a kingdom can be to any of the sons of men.

IV. Consider the great purposes of the present life can be answered only in time; for there are certain important duties peculiar to this world, which if unperformed here, must remain so for ever, because eternity is not the season for them.

Both worlds have their proper business allotted them; and the proper business of the one cannot be done in the other. Eternity and time are intended for quite different purposes. The one is seed-time; the other, harvest: the one is the season for working; the other, for receiving the wages: and if we would invert the unchangeable order of things, and defer the business of life till after death, we shall find ourselves miserably mistaken. Therefore if saints would make progress in the religion of sinners, I mean that religion which becomes our present sinful state; that religion which is a course of discipline to prepare and educate us for hea-

ven; which is a painful process for our refinement, to qualify us for that pure region; if they would cherish a noble ambition, and not only ensure happiness, but high degrees of it; if they would be of service to mankind as members of civil or religious society; and particularly, if they would be instrumental to form others for a blessed immortality, and save souls from death, by converting sinners from the error of their way; if they would do these things, the present life is the only time. In heaven they will have more noble employ. These things must now be done, or never. And O! what pious heart can bear the thought of leaving the world while these are undone? Would you not desire to enter into heaven ripe for it? To be completely formed by your education, before you enter upon a state of maturity? O! does not your heart burn to do something for that gracious God and Saviour, that has done and suffered so much for you! to be an instrument of some service to the world, while you are passing through it? If this be your desire, now is the time. When once death has laid his cold hand upon you, you are for ever disabled from such services as these. Then farewell to all opportunities of usefulness, in the manner of the present life. Then even your children and dearest friends may run on in sin, and perish, while it is not in your power so much as to speak one word to dissuade them. Therefore enter upon this new year with hearty resolutions to be more zealous and laborious in these respects than you have ever yet been.

Again, If sinners, who now are in a state of condemnation, would escape out of it; if they who were at present slaves to sin would become sincere converts to righteousness; if they would use the means of grace for that purpose, now is the time. There is none of this work in hell: they no sooner enter into the eternal world, than their state will be unchangeably and eternally fixed. The present life is the only state of trial; and if we do not turn out well in this trial, we shall never have another. All are ripe for eternity, before they are removed into it; the good ripe for heaven, and the wicked ripe for hell; the one, vessels

of mercy afore-prepared for glory; and the other vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and for nothing else: and therefore they must remain for ever in their respective mansions. In hell indeed sinners repent; but their repentance is their punishment, and has no tendency to amend or save them. They mourn and weep; but their tears are but oil to increase the flame. They cry, and perhaps pray; but the hour of audience and acceptance is past—past for ever! The means of grace are all gone: the sanctifying influences of the spirit are all withdrawn for ever. And hence they will corrupt and putrify into mere masses of pure unmingled wickedness and misery. Sinners! realize this thought, and sure it must rouse you out of sleep. Trifle on a little longer, and it is over with you: spend a few days more as you have spent your time past, and you will be ingulphed in as hopeless misery as any devil in hell. Another year now meets you, and invites you to improve it to prepare for eternity; and if you waste it like the past, you may be undone for ever. Therefore, take Solomon's warning, *whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge in the grave, whither you are going.* Eccles. ix. 10.

These considerations, methinks, must have some weight, both upon slumbering christians and impenitent sinners, to persuade them to awake out of sleep. I now proceed to a few considerations peculiar to each.

Upon slumbering saints I would again try the force of the apostolic consideration in my text; *awake, for now is your salvation nearer than when you believed.* Heaven may be only at the distance of a year or an hour from you: it is, however certainly nearer to-day than ever it was before. As many days as are past, so much the less time have you to groan away in the present life. And shall you indeed, in so short a time, be imparadised in the bosom of your God? Shall you so soon have done with all the sins and sorrows that now oppress you? Are your days of warfare with temptation so near a close? Shall you so soon be advanced to all the glory and blessedness of the heavenly state, and be as happy as your nature can bear? Is this in-

deed the case? And must not the prospect rouse you, and fire your hearts? Is not salvation the thing you have been longing and labouring for? And now can you slumber when it is so near? Can you sleep when the night of life is so far spent, and the dawn of eternal day is ready to shine round you? Can you sleep on the brink of eternity, on the threshhold of heaven?

The apostle here intimates, that the approach of salvation is great cause of joy to believers—cause of joy, though death lies between, and salvation cannot reach us till we pass through the gloomy vale. Therefore, believers, I may wish you joy, in prospect that you shall soon die. This wretched world shall not be your residence always. Your worst enemies upon earth or in hell will not be able to confine you here the length of Methuselah's age, much less for ever. You may rejoice in the prospect of your speedy dissolution, because death is not nearer to you than your salvation. Before your cooling clay is shrouded, your enlarged souls will be in heaven. You will be striking instances of the truth of Solomon's remark, that *the day of one's death is better than the day of his birth.* Eccl. vii. 1. Your death will be your birth-day, which will introduce you into a better world. Mortals in their language will pronounce you dead; but angels will shout an immortal born! born to an everlasting life! born to a crown! born to *an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away.* And must not the prospect of this glorious day so near rouse you out of sleep? Can you not watch one hour, or one year? shall salvation surprize you asleep?

Some of you perhaps are now thinking, "O! if I were certain my salvation is so near, it would even transport me, and inspire me with flaming zeal and unwearied activity. But alas! I am afraid of a disappointment. It is true, I cannot but entertain some humble hope, which the severest trial cannot overthrow. But O! what if I should be mistaken! This jealousy makes me tremble, and shrink back from the prospect."

This may be the case of many an honest soul. But can this be pleaded as a reason or excuse for security? Alas! can you sleep in such a dreadful suspense?

sleep, while you are uncertain what shall become of you through an endlesss duration? If you have not the sure prospect of salvation to awaken you, methinks the fear of damnation must effectually do it; for it is certain, one or the other is near you: therefore endeavour, by severe self-examination, to push the matter to some certain issue. Resolve that you will not spend another day, much less another year, in a state of such dangerous alarming uncertainty. If this point is not yet determined, it is certainly *high time for you to awake out of sleep.*

Consider farther how far your religious improvements have come short of your own resolutions and expectations, as well as your obligations. Ye happy souls, who now enjoy a good hope through grace, recollect the time when you were in a very different and more melancholy condition; the time when your spirits bled with a thousand wounds; when the terrors of the Lord set themselves in array against you, and the thunders of Sinai rung the most alarming peals in your astonished ears; when the arrows of God stuck fast in you, and the poison of them drank up your spirits; when guilt lay heavy upon your consciences, and sunk you down into the depth of despondency; when you were haunted with alarming apprehensions of divine vengeance night and day; when you went about crying for a Saviour—"O! for a Saviour!"—but your cries seemed to be in vain; O! what were then your vows and resolutions, if it should please God to deliver you! Did you then expect you would fall asleep so soon after your deliverance? Recollect also the happy hour, when the face of a reconciled God first smiled upon you, when Jesus appeared to your minds in all the attractive glories of a Saviour, an all-sufficient Saviour in a desperate case; when he *delivered your soul from death, your feet from falling, and your eyes from tears;* when he inspired your desponding hearts with hope, and revived you with the heavenly cordials of his love; O! what then were your thoughts and resolutions? How strongly were you bent to make him returns of gratitude! how firmly did you bind yourselves to be his servants for ever! But how soon, alas!

did you begin to slumber! How far short have you fallen of your vows and promises! Recollect also what were your expectations at that memorable time. O! would you then have believed it, that in the space of 10 or 20 years you would have made such small progress in your heavenly course, as you have in fact done? Had you not better hopes! But alas! how are you disappointed! what sorry servants have you been to so good a master, in comparison of what you expected! And can you bear the thought of slumbering on still? O! shall this year pass by like the former? Sure you cannot bear the thought. Therefore awake out of sleep; rise and work for your God.

Let me conclude my address to you, with this advice: Begin this new year by dedicating yourselves afresh to God, and solemnly renewing your covenant with him. Take some hour of retirement, this evening, or as soon as you can redeem time. Call yourselves to account for the year past, and all your life. Recollect your various infirmities, mourn over them, and resolve, in the strength of divine grace, you will guard against them for the time to come. Examine yourselves both as to the reality of your religion, and as to your proficiency in it. Conclude the whole by casting yourselves anew upon Jesus Christ, and devoting yourselves for this new year entirely to him; resolved to live more to him than you have hitherto done, and depending upon him to conduct you safe through whatever this year may bring forth, whether prosperity or adversity, whether life or death. This is the true and only means whereby we can attain that happiness we ought all to be in pursuit of: that pleasure which will never end.

Let me now address a few considerations to impenitent sinners, peculiarly adapted to them.

Consider what a dreadful risk you run by neglecting the present time. The longer you indulge yourselves in sin, the harder it will be to break off from it; and do you not then run the risk of cementing an eternal union with that deadly evil? The longer you cherish a wicked temper, the stronger the habits of sin will grow. And are you not in danger of becoming eternal slaves

to it! The longer you continue impenitent, the harder your hearts will grow; the oftener you do violence to your consciences, the more insensible they will become. And are you not taking direct ways to confirm yourselves in impenetrable hardness of heart, and contracting a reprobate mind? The more you sin against God, and grieve his Spirit, the more you provoke him to withhold the influences of his grace, and in righteous judgment to give you up. And dare you to run so dreadful a risk as this? The more time you waste, the greater is your work, and the less your time to perform it. By how much the longer you waste your time, by so much the shorter you make your day of grace. Alas! the day of your visitation may be drawing fast towards evening, when *the things that belong to your peace will be eternally hid from your eyes.* Is it not then high time for you to awake out of sleep? Will you rather run such a dreadful risk than rouse out of your stupid security? O! what will be the end of such a course!

Let me deal plainly and without reserve with you, on a point too dangerous to allow of flattery. If you do not now awake, and turn your attention to the concerns of your souls, it is but too probable you will still go on in carnal security, and at last perish for ever. Blessed be God, this is not certain, and therefore you have no reason to despair; but it is really too probable, and therefore you have great reason to fear. This alarming probability, methinks, must force its evidence upon your own minds, upon principles you cannot reasonably dispute. You have lived twenty, thirty, or forty years, or more, in the world. In this time you have enjoyed the same means of grace which you can expect in time to come. You had done less to provoke the great God to cast you off: your sinful habits were not so strong, nor your hearts so much hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; you were not so much inured to the gospel, nor were your consciences so stunned by repeated violences, as you may expect in time to come: and the longer you live in this condition, the more and more discouraging it will grow. I will by no means limit a sovereign God in the exercise

of his free grace. But this is evident, that in human view, and according to appearances, it was much more likely you would have been converted in time past, than that you will be coverted in time to come. The most hopeful part of life is over with you: and yet even in that, you were not brought to repentance. How much less likely is it then, that you will be converted in time to come?

Suffer me to tell you plainly (for it is benevolence that makes the declaration) that I cannot but tremble for some of you. I am really afraid some of you will perish for ever;—and the ground of my fear is this: The most generous charity cannot but conclude, that some of you are impenitent sinners; your temper and conduct proclaim it aloud: and it is very unlikely, all things considered, that you will be ever otherwise. Since you have not repented in the most promising season of life, it is much to be feared you will not repent in the less promising part of it. And since no impenitent unholy sinner can enter into the kingdom of heaven, it is much to be feared you will perish for ever; not because the mercy of God, or the merit of Christ, is insufficient to save you, if you should apply to him for it according to the terms of the gospel; not because your case is in itself hopeless, if you would awake out of sleep, and seek the Lord in earnest: nor because you have not sufficient encouragement for laborious endeavours; but because it is too likely you will go on careless and secure, as you have done, and persist in it, till all your time is gone, and then your case will be desperate. I honestly warn you of your danger, which is too great to be concealed. And yet I give you sufficient encouragement to fly from it, while I assure you, that if you now lay your condition to heart, and earnestly use all proper means for your conversion, you have the utmost reason to hope for success: as much reason as the saints now in heaven once had, when in your condition; and in your condition they once were.

Therefore, now, sinners, awake out of sleep. Instead of entering upon this new year with carousals and extravagancies, consecrate it to the great purpose

for which it is given you, by engaging in earnest in the great work of your salvation. *What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be he will think upon thee, that thou perish not.* Jonah i. 6. *Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, that Christ may give thee light.* Ephes. v. 14.

Consider, this year may lay you low in the dust of death. How many are now in the grave, who saw the last new-year's day! And though I cannot point out the persons, yet, without a spirit of prophecy, I may venture to foretel, that some of us will be in heaven or hell before this year perfo:ms its round; some grey head, or some sprightly youth; perhaps you, or perhaps I. And since none of us know who it shall be, none of us are exempted from the necessity of immediate preparation. O! that we may all be so wise, as to consider our latter end!

I beg leave of my promiscuous auditory to employ a few minutes in addressing myself to my important family, whom my paternal affection would always single out from the rest, even when I am speaking in general terms to a mixed crowd. Therefore, my dear charge, my pupils, my children, and every tender and endearing name! ye young immortals, ye embryo-angels or infant-friends, ye blooming lovely fading flowers of human nature, the hope of your parents and friends, of church and state, the hope, joy, and glory of your teachers! hear one that loves you; one that has nothing to do in the world but to promote your best interest; one that would account this the greatest blessing he could enjoy in his pilgrimage, and whose nights and days are sometimes made almost equally restless by his affectionate anxieties for you; hear him upon a subject in which you are most intimately interested; a subject the most important that even an apostle or an angel could address you upon; and that is, the right improvement of time, the present time, and preparation for eternity. It is necessary that you in particular, you above all others, should know the time, that it is now high time for you to awake out of sleep. I make no doubt but you all look upon religion as an object worthy of your notice. You all as certainly

believe there is a God, as that there is a creature, or that yourselves exist: you all believe heaven and hell are not majestic chimeras, or fairy lands, but the most important realities; and that you must in a little time be the residents of the one or the other. It cannot therefore be a question with any of you, whether you shall mind religion at all! On that you are all determined. But the question is, what is the most proper time for it? whether the present, or some uncertain hereafter? And in what order you should attend to it, whether in the first place, and above all, even in your early days? or whether you should not rather indulge yourselves in the pleasures of youth for some time, and then make religion the dull business of old age. If any of you hesitate upon this point, it may be easily solved. This is the most convenient promising season for this purpose that you are likely to see: never will you live more free from care, or more remote from temptation. When you launch out into the noise, and bustle, and hurry, and company, and business, and vice of the world, you will soon find the scene changed for the worse. He must be a tempter to himself, who can find a temptation, while immured under this roof, and immersed in books. Never will you see the time, in your natural state, when your sins will be so conquerable, and your hearts so tender, and susceptive of good impressions; though even now, if you know yourselves, you find your sins are invincibly strong to you, and your hearts impenitrably hard. Therefore now, my dear youth, now in this inviting season, awake out of sleep; awake to righteousness, and sin not. I beg you would not now commit sin with a design to repent of it afterwards; for can you be so foolish, as knowingly and deliberately to do that which you explicitly intend to repent of? that is, to do that which you intend to wish undone, and to lament with broken hearts that ever you did it. Can Bedlam itself parallel the folly of this? O take warning from the fate of your wretched predecessors in this course. Could you ask the crowds of lost ghosts, who are now suffering the punishment of their sin, whether they intended to persist impenitent in it, and perish? they would all answer, that they

either vainly flattered themselves they had repented already; or intended to repent before they died; but death seized them unawares, and put an end to all their sanguine hopes. Young sinners among them imagined they should not die till old age; and old age itself thought it might hold out a few days longer, and that it was time enough to repent. But O! they have now discovered their error, when it is too late to correct it. Therefore do not harbour one thought of putting off repentance to a sick bed, or to old age; that is the most inconvenient and desperate season in your whole life; and if you fix upon this, one would think you had viewed your whole life on purpose to find out the most unfit and discouraging period of it for the most necessary, difficult, and important work in the world. Come then, now devote yourselves to God, and away with all excuses and delays. Remember, that upon the principles I have laid down, principles that must gain your assent by the force of their own evidence, I say, remember, that upon these principles it is extremely likely you will always persist impenitent in sin, and perish for ever, if you waste away the present season of youth, destitute of vital religion. You may every day have less and less hope of yourselves: and can you bear the thought of perishing for ever? Are your hearts so soon arrived to such a pitch of hardiness, as to be proof against the terrors of the prospect? It cannot be! for *who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?* Isa. xxxiii. 14. As for such of you as have not the great work to begin, I have only this to say, *Be stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord,* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

SERMON LX.

On the Death of His late Majesty King George II*.

2 Sam. i. 19.
How are the Mighty fallen!

GEORGE is no more! George, the mighty, the just, the gentle, and the wise; George, the father of Britain and her Colonies, the guardian of laws and liberty, the protector of the oppressed, the arbiter of Europe, the terror of tyrants and France; George, the friend of man, the benefactor of millions, is no more!—millions tremble at the alarm. Britain expresses her sorrow in national groans. Europe re-echoes to the melancholy sound. The melancholy sound circulates far and wide. This remote American continent shares in the loyal sympathy. The wide intermediate Atlantic rolls the tide of grief to these distant shores; and even the recluse sons of Nassau-Hall feel the immense bereavement, with all the sensibility of a filial heart; and must mourn with their country, with Britain, with Europe, with the world—George was our Father too. In his reign, a reign so auspicious to literature, and all the improvements of human nature, was this foundation laid; and the College of New Jersey received its existence. And though, like the sun, he shone in a distant sphere, we felt, most sensibly felt his benign influences cherishing Science and her votaries in this her new-built temple.

In doing this humble honour to the memory of our late sovereign, we cannot incur the suspicion of mercenary mourners paying homage to the rising sun. But we indulge and give vent to the spontaneous disinterested sorrows of sincere loyalty and gratitude, and

* Delivered in Nassau-Hall, Jan. 14, 1761.

drop our honest tears over his sacred dust, who can be our benefactor no more; too distant, too obscure, and undeserving, to hope for the favourable notice of his illustrious successor. Let ambition put on the face of mourning, and all the parade of affected grief, within the reach of the royal eye; and make her court to a living prince, with all the ceremonial forms of lamentation for the deceased; but let our tears flow down unnoticed into our own bosoms. Let our grief, which is always fond of retirement, cherish and vent itself without ostentation, and free from the restraint of the public eye. It will at least afford us the generous pleasure of reflecting, that we voluntarily discharge our duty, unbribed and disinterested; and it will give relief to our bursting hearts, impatient of the suppression of our sorrows.

How is *the mighty fallen!*—fallen under the superior power of death!—Death, the king of terrors, the conqueror of conquerors; whom riches cannot bribe, nor power resist; whom goodness cannot soften, nor dignity and loyalty deter, or awe to a reverential distance. Death intrudes into palaces as well as cottages; and arrests the monarch as well as the slave. The robes of majesty and the rags of beggary are equal preludes to the shroud: and a throne is only a precipice, from whence to fall with greater noise and more extensive ruin into the grave. Since death has climbed the British throne, and thence precipitated George the Mighty, who can hope to escape? If temperance, that best preservative of health and life; if extensive utility to half the world; if the united prayers of nations; if the collected virtues of the Man and the King, could secure an earthly immortality—never, O lamented George! never should thy fall have added fresh honours to the trophies of death. But since this king of Britain is no more, let the inhabitants of courts look out for mansions in the dust. Let those gods on earth prepare to die like men; and sink down to a level with beggars, worms, and clay. Let subjects *be wise, and consider their latter end,* when the alarm of mortality is sounded from the throne; and

He who lived for their benefit, dies for their benefit too—dies to remind them, that they also must die.

But how astonishing and lamentable is the stupidity of mankind! Can the natural or the moral world exhibit another phænomenon so shocking and unaccountable! Death sweeps off thousands of our fellow-subjects every year. Our neighbours, like leaves in autumn, drop into the grave, in a thick succession; and our attendance upon funerals is almost as frequent and formal as our visits of friendship or complaisance. Nay, sometimes death enters in at our windows, and ravages our families before our eyes. The air, the ocean, the earth, and all the elements, are armed with the powers of death; and have their pestilential vapours and inclemencies, their tempests and inundations, their eruptions and volcanos to destroy the life of man. A thousand dangers lie in ambush for us. Nay, the principles of mortality lurk in our own constitutions: and sickness, the herald of the last enemy, often warns us to prepare. Yet how few realize the thought, that they must die! How few familiarize to their minds that all-important hour, pregnant with consequences of great, of incomparable, of infinite moment! How many forget they must die, till they feel it; and stand fearless, inapprehensive and insolent, upon the slippery brink of eternity, till they unexpectedly fall, and are ingulphed for ever in the boundless ocean! The sons of Adam the sinner, those fleeting phantoms of a day, put on the air of immortality upon earth; and make no provision for their subsistence in the proper region of immortals beyond the grave. Pilgrims and strangers imagine themselves everlasting residents; and make this transitory life their all, as if earth was to be their eternal home; as if eternity was but a fairy-land, and heaven and hell but majestic chimeras. But shall not this loud alarm, that spreads over half the globe, awaken us out of our vain dream of an earthly immortality? When *the mighty* is *fallen*, shall not the feeble tremble? If the father of a people must cease to live, shall not the people expect to die? If vulgar deaths are so frequent or insignificant, that they have lost their monitory force, and are viewed

with as much indifference as the setting of the sun, or the fading of a flower; shall not the death of a King, the death of the King of Britain, constrain his subjects to realize the prospect of their own mortality, and diffuse that universal seriousness among them which that prospect inspires? If thus improved, this public loss would be a public blessing; and the reformation of a kingdom would be a greater happiness than the life of the best of princes. Thus improved, how easy and how glorious would the death of George the Second render the reign of George the Third, who now sways the sceptre, and in whom the hopes of kingdoms center! To govern subjects on earth, who are prepared for the hierarchy of heaven, would be a province worthy of an angel.

Since the mighty is fallen; since George is no more; how vain are all things beneath the sun! *Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.* How unworthy the hopes, how inferior to the desires, how unequal to the duration of human nature! Can the riches of Britain or the honours of a crown, can the extent of dominion or the laurels of victory, now afford the least pleasure to the royal corpse that lies senseless in the dust; or to the royal spirit which has winged its flight to its own region, to the world of kindred spirits? No; all these are now as insignificant as mere nothings to him, as the conquests of Alexander, or the riches and honours of the Henries and Edwards, who filled the same throne centuries ago.

"Who then art thou, who settest thine affections on things below? Art thou greater than the deceased? Dost thou value thyself on thy birth? The most highly descended is no more! Dost thou value thyself on thy riches? The King of Britain is no more! Dost thou value thyself on thy power? The master of the seas, the arbiter of Europe, is no more? Dost thou glory in thy constancy, humanity, affection to thy friend; justice, veracity, popularity, universal love—But I forbear." Human vanity cannot swell so high as to presume upon the comparison.

"How lately were the eyes of all Europe" and America, "thrown upon this great Man? For man let me

call him now, nor contradict the declaration which his mortality has made. They that find him now, must seek for him; and seek for him in the dust! What on earth but must tell us this world is vain, if thrones declare it! If kings, if British kings are demonstrations of it,

> ——— O, how wretched
> Is that poor man that hangs on Princes favours!

"A throne is the shining period, the golden termination of the worldly man's prospect. His passions affect, his understanding conceives nothing beyond it, or the favours it can bestow. The sun, the expanse of heaven, or what lies higher, have no lustre in his sight; no room in his pre-engaged imagination; it is all a superfluous waste. When therefore his monarch dies, he is left in darkness: his sun is set: it is the night of ambition with him; which naturally damps him into reflection; and fills that reflection with awful thoughts.

With reverence then be it spoken, what can God in his ordinary means do more to turn his affections into their right channel, and send them forward to their proper end? Providence, by his king's decease, takes away the very ground on which his delusion rose: it sinks before him: his error is supplanted, nor has his folly whereon to stand, but must return like the dove in the deluge to his own bosom again. By this he is convinced that his ultimate point of view is not only vain in its nature, but vain in fact: it not only may, but has actually failed him. What then is he under the necessity of doing, this boundary of his sight being removed? Either he must look forward (and what is beyond it but God?) or he must close his eyes in darkness, and still repose his trust in things which he has experienced to be vain. Such accidents, therefore, however fatal to his secular, are the mercy of God to his eternal interest; and say, with the sacred text, *Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth**.

If even kings cannot extract perfect happiness from

* Dr. Young's True Estimate of Human Life, p. 59, 60.

things below; if the gross, unsubstantial, and fleeting enjoyments of life are in their own nature incapable of affording pure, solid, and lasting felicity, must we not all despair of it? Yet such a happiness we desire; such we need; nay, such we must have; or our very existence will become our curse, and all our powers of enjoyment but capacities of pain. And where shall we seek for it? where, but in the supreme Good? Let us *lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, and be rich towards God;* and then we shall live in state-affluence, and consummate felicity, when crowns, and thrones, and kings, nay, when stars, and suns, and worlds are sunk into promiscuous ruin.

But though crowns, and thrones, and kings, though stars, and suns, and worlds sink into promiscuous ruin, there is one gift of heaven to mankind, which shall survive; which shall flourish and reign for ever; a gift little esteemed or solicited, and which makes no brilliant figure in mortal eyes; I mean religion—Religion! Thou brightest ornament of human nature! Thou fairest image of the divine! Thou sacred spark of celestial fire, which now glimmers with but a feeble lustre; but will shine bright in the night of affliction; will irradiate the thick glooms of death, and blaze out into immortality in its native element! This will be an unfailing source of happiness, through the revolutions of eternal ages.—May I be the man to whom heaven shall bestow this most precious gift of divine bounty! and let crowns and kingdoms be scattered with an undistinguishing hand to the worthless and the brave, to the wise man and the fool; I will not murmur, envy, nor despond. These majestic trifles are not the tests of real worth, nor the badges of heaven's favourites: it is religion that marks out the happy man; that distinguishes the heir of an unfading crown; who, when the dubious conflict of life is over, *shall inherit all things*, and sit in triumph for ever with the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

If majesty has any charms to a mind truly noble; if dominion has any attractive influence upon a benevolent spirit; it must be as it affords a more extensive sphere of beneficence, and yields the generous disinter-

ested god-like pleasure of making multitudes happy This may reconcile a mind intrinsically great to the self-denial of a court, to the cares of government, and render the burden of a crown tolerable. And in this respect, how happy and illustrious was our late king! It was an honour which could fall to the lot of but few of his subjects, to have such intimate access to the royal presence, as to furnish materials for a panegyric upon his personal and private virtues; but his public and regal virtues diffused their beams to every territory of his vast dominions, and shone with efficacious, though gentle force, even upon us, in these remote ends of the earth. His public virtues as a king, thousands attest and celebrate in every region of the world. These we know, of these we have had a long and delightful experience for four-and-thirty years. These therefore we can justly celebrate: and to these I shall confine myself; though I am not altogether uninformed of some amiable anecdotes of his majesty's personal virtue in private life.

Can the British annals, in the compass of seventeen hundred years, produce a period more favourable to liberty, peace, prosperity, commerce, and religion? In this happy reign, the prerogative meditated no invasions upon the rights of the people; nor attempted to exalt itself above the law. George the Great, but unambitious, consulted the rights of the people as well as of the crown; and claimed no powers but such as were granted to him by the constitution; and what is the constitution but the voluntary compact of sovereign and subject? and is not this the foundation of their mutual obligations? The commons, who, from their situation in the various parts of the kingdom, are presumed to be best acquainted with its state, always found majesty condescending to leave the interests of the country to their deliberations; and ready to assent to all their salutary proposals. The times when parliaments were a troublesome restraint are forgotten, or remembered with patriot-indignation. The monarch himself frowned upon the principles of arbitrary power; and was an advocate for the liberties of the people. His parliament were his faithful counsellors; to whom

he communicated his measures, with all the frankness and confidence natural to conscious integrity. In an aristocracy the house of Lords could hardly enjoy more authority and independence, nor the house of Commons in a democracy more freedom of speech and determination, but far less dignity and unanimity than under the monarchy of George the Second. In his were united the advantages of all forms of government; free from the inconveniences peculiar to each in a state of separation. Happy! thrice happy, to live under a reign so gentle and auspicious! How different would have been our situation under the baleful influence of the ill-boding name of Stuart!

Fond of peace, and tender of the life and blood of man, our late most gracious sovereign never engaged in war, but with compassionate reluctance, and with the unanimous approbation of his people. He drew the sword, not to gratify his own ambition or avarice, or to revenge a personal injury; but to defend the rights of his subjects, to relieve the oppressed, and to restrain and chastise the disturbers and tyrants of the world He always aimed the thunder of Britain against the guilty head; but innocence had nothing to fear from the terrors of his hands. French perfidy and Austrian ingratitude roused his generous resentment; but the merit of Frederic, the Prussian hero, the second champion of liberty and the protestant religion, when oppressed by confederate kingdoms and empires, erased the memory of past differences, and made him his friend and ally.

What a vigilant fatherly care did he extend to the infant colonies of Britain, exposed in this savage wilderness! Hence the safety our once defenceless frontiers now enjoy. Hence the reduction of that mongrel race of French and Indian savages, who would have been the eternal enemies of humanity, peace, religion, and Britons. And hence the glory of Amherst and Wolfe; and the addition of Canada to the British empire in America. Surely the name of George the Second must be dear in these rescued provinces, and particularly in Nassau-Hall, while peace and safety are esteemed blessings, while the terrors of a barbarous

war are shocking to humanity, and while gratitude lives in an American breast. And George the Third will be dearer to us, as he bears the ever memorable name of our great deliverer.

He never usurped the prerogative of heaven, by assuming the sovereignty of conscience, or the conduct of the human understanding, in matters of faith and religious speculation. He had deeply imbibed the principles of liberty; and could well distinguish between the civil rights of society and the sacred rights of religion. He knew the nature of man and of Christianity too well, to imagine that the determinations of human authority, or the sanctions of penal laws, could convince the mind of one divine truth or duty; or that the imposition of uniformity in minute points of faith, or in the forms of worship and ecclesiastical government, was consistent with free inquiry and the rights of private judgment; without which, genuine christianity cannot, though the external grandeur of the church may flourish. In his reign the state was not the dupe of aspiring churchmen, but the guardian of Christians in general; nor was the secular arm the engine of ecclesiastical vengeance, but the defence of the Dissenter as well as the Conformist; of the toleration, as well as the establishment. His reign was not stained with blood, shed by the ferocious hand of blind bigotry: but the thoughts, the tongue, and the pen were free; and truth was armed only with her own gentle and harmless weapons; those weapons with which she has always spread her conquests, in opposition to fires and racks; to the tortures of death, and to the powers of earth and hell. Long may Britons continue free in a world of slaves! And long may a George adorn the throne, and guard the sacred rights of conscience!

Was ever king more beloved by his people? Was ever government more deeply founded in the hearts of its subjects? Whatever factions have embroiled the nation; whatever clamours have been raised against the ministry; whatever popular suspicions of the abilities or integrity of his servants; still the king was the

favourite of all; he was the center in which all parties were united.

Rebellion indeed (to the horror and surprise of posterity let it be known!) the most unnatural unprovoked rebellion presumed to lift up its head even under his gracious reign, and attempted to transfer to a despicable pretender the crown conferred upon him by a free people. But how gently, and yet how effectually was the monster quelled! And how happy have been the consequences to thousands; particularly to the brave misguided Highlanders; who by the munificence of that very king they risked their lives to depose, now taste the sweets of liberty and property; and need no farther argument in favour of the illustrious house of Hanover*!

The evening of his life was the meridian of his glory; and death seized him on the summit of human greatness. What illustrious victories have attended his arms in every quarter of the globe? Asia and Africa, as well as Europe and America, have trembled at his name; and felt the force of British revenge, executed by his righteous hand. What a shining figure will the three last years, the æra of British glory, make in the history of the world! And how will they at once eternize and endear the name of George the Second!

How bloody and extensive has been the present war! And how important the interests at stake! It has spread over both the old and new continent, like an all-devouring conflagration. Nations have bled in a thousand veins; and the precious blood of man has streamed by sea and land, shed by the savage hand of

* The dissolution of the Highland Clans, those petty tyrannies, upon terms not disadvantageous to the Chiefs themselves, and highly agreeable to their vassals: the opening a communication into those once inaccessible regions by public roads; the establishment of protestant missionaries and English schools; and the introduction of manufactories, supported by the royal bounty, and particularly by the income of the estates confiscated in the last rebellion;—these have been the gentle but effectual expedients to extirpate popery and rebellion, under the administration of George the Second.—These were agreeable to so mild a reign; and these have already done infinitely more to accomplish this patriotic and Christian design, than all the severe preposterous measures of former ages.

man. The balance of power, the liberty, the peace, and religion of Europe, as well as the independency, the freedom, the commerce, and the territories of Britain and her colonies, have been the prize in dispute; a prize equal to the whole world to us. And how gloomy and ill-boding was the aspect of our affairs in the first years of this war! The people factious, clamorous, and exasperated! The ministry divided, improvident and dilatory! Commanders imprudently brave and fool-hardy, or weak and dastardly! What abortive schemes and blasted expeditions! What sanguine hopes and mortifying disappointments! What pompous undertakings and inglorious results! What British, un-British gasconade and cowardice, boasting and timidity! And what Gallic bravery and success! *(Proh curia! inversique mores!)* What depredations and barbarities, what desertion and consternation upon our frontiers, through a length of above a thousand miles! What downcast airs on every countenance! What trembling expectations in every heart! But in that anxious, dubious crisis, George was alive! (Let both sides the Atlantic resound with praises, let every British heart glow with gratitude to the Sovereign of the universe, who prolonged the royal life, and preserved his capacities unimpaired in the decline of nature!—George was alive!) And with a steady skilful hand managed the helm in the threatening storm, and conducted the sinking state, in which our All was embarked, within sight of the harbour of peace, safety, and glory, before he resigned the charge. His gracious ear was open to the voice of the people, when he received the illustrious Pitt to so great a share of the administration. And what a happy and glorious revolution have we since seen in the schemes of policy and the events of war! Had heaven punished a guilty nation, by removing their guardian in that period of discord, langour, dejection, and mortification, while the heir of the crown was in his minority, how dismal might have been the consequences! Indeed we could have sincerely paid to so good a king that eastern compliment, *O king, live for ever!* for never, O lamented George! never could thy subjects be weary of

thee. But since the mighty must fall, as well as the feeble; since George the august and well-beloved, must die, how great the mercy, that the melancholy period was so long delayed! It would be ingratitude, it would be impiety, it would be atheism, not to acknowledge the agency of Providence in so important an event.

George, our father, is no more!—No more, I mean, the ornament of the British throne: no more the benefactor of mortals: no more the inhabitant of earth. His precious dust is ere now deposited with his royal predecessors, where majesty lies in ruins*: and we doubt not but the last honours have been performed to his venerable remains, agreeable to the gratitude and generosity of the nation, and the munificent prince who inherits his crown and kingdom. And is this senseless dust all that is left of the greatest of kings? Has he suffered a total extinction of being? Is he entirely dead to himself, to the universe, and to God?—No, he lives! He greatly lives the life of immortals! He lives in the immense region of spirits, where monarchs and kings are private men: where all the superficial distinctions of birth, riches, power, and majesty, are lost for ever; and all the distinction that remains, arises from virtue and vice—from our having acted our part well or ill in the station where we are fixed; whether on the throne of majesty, in the chains of slavery, or in the intermediate classes of life: there royalty appears disrobed and uncrowned before him, *who regardeth not the rich more than the poor:* there triumphant tyranny, that bade defiance to human power, is blasted and degraded by the frown of Omnipotence: and there, those rulers of men, who were the servants of God, are advanced to a higher sphere of dominion and beneficence; and the badges of

* In Westminster Abbey.

"That ancient, sacred, and illustrious dome,
"Where soon or late fair Albion's heroes come,
"From camps and courts, tho' great, and wise, and just,
"To feed the worm, and moulder into dust;
"That solemn mansion of the royal dead,
"Where passing slaves o'er sleeping monarchs tread."

Young's Last Day.

earthly majesty are superfluous to their dignity, and would but conceal their real worth. There they are clothed with *the robes of salvation, and the garments of praise*, and wear crowns of unfading glory, infinitely brighter than those which the gold, and gems, and glittering trifles of earth can compose. There our charity would place our departed sovereign, in a station as much superior to that of king of Great Britain, as an angel to a man. But it is not for mortals to pry into the inviolable secrets of the invisible world.

When we view him, in this light, the medium in which persons and things appear in eternity, we no longer revere the king. The crown, the scepter, and all the regalia of earthly majesty, vanish. But we behold something more venerable, more majestic, more divine—The immortal! the great spirit stript of all the empty parade and pageanty of outward shew, and clothed with all the God-like regalia of its own nature! illustrious in its own intrinsic dignity! This view of kings and emperors does not diminish, but heighten and brighten their majesty. This is the most venerable and striking attitude in which kings and emperors themselves can appear; though in this view peasants and slaves claim an equality with them. All equally immortal! And what renders the nature of man, or even of angels, so important, so noble, so divine, as immortality! This makes the man infinitely superior to the monarch; and advances the offspring of the dust to a kind of equality with the natives of heaven.

But though George still lives to himself, to the universe, and to God (for all live to him) yet to his once-loved kingdoms he is no more. Here again, I must retract the melancholy thought—He still lives, he still adorns the throne, he still blesses the world, in the person of his royal descendant and successor. And if the early appearance of genius, humanity, condescension, the spirit of liberty and love of his people; if British birth, education, and connections; if the favourable prepossessions and high expectations of the nation; if the present glory and terror of the British arms; if the wishes and prayers of every lover of his

country, signify any thing, or have any efficacy, George the third will reign like George the Second.

What then remains, but that we transfer to him the loyalty, duty, and affection, we were wont to pay to his amiable predecessor! He ascends the throne in the prime of life and vigour, at a juncture more honourable and glorious than Britain, perhaps, or America, has ever seen. He had early the example of the best of kings before his eyes, as a finished model of government, upon principles truly British. And this has received a powerful sanction from the example and instructions of his royal mother, the honour of her sex; who has made so shining and amiable a figure in the British court, ever since her first appearance. He has able generals in the field; able admirals in the navy; a navy perhaps equal to the united fleets of the universe; and able counsellors in the cabinet. His subjects numerous, rich, free, brave, loyal, and affectionate: his enemies defeated, dispirited, exhausted, disappointed in their last efforts, and baffled in their forlorn hope: the commerce of Britain as extensive as the globe, and collecting the riches of the world from every soil and climate. In this promising situation of affairs, what a long, happy, and glorious reign have we in prospect! How may we congratulate the contemporaries of our young king, who enter into public life as he ascends the throne, and are likely to share in the honour and felicities of his administration! And with what ardent gratitude and devotion should we bow the knee to him, *by whom kings reign and princes decree justice*, who opens so bright and glorious a prospect! If the agency of the most High, *who ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever he pleaseth*, be ungratefully overlooked, our loyalty is no longer a virtue: it loses its worth; and degenerates into a mere compliment to the creature, at the expence of the Creator's honour. It is acknowledging the deputy, but rejecting the constituent*.

* Thus agreeable and encouraging did the dawn of the present reign appear to me, before any public act had confirmed those favourable an-

But notwithstanding this favourable and promising posture of affairs, methinks we cannot make a transition from reign to reign without some suspense. We are passing into a new state of political existence; entering upon a strange untried period; and it is natural to be a little damped at our first entrance. The changes of life are so frequent and unexpected, and the course of human affairs so seldom runs on in a steady uniform tenor for a length of years, that we can be certain of almost nothing but what is past. The most promising posture of affairs may put on another form; and all the honours and acquisitions of a well-conducted and successful war may be ingloriously lost by the intrigues of negociation and a dishonourable peace. The best of kings (with all due deference to majesty be it spoken) may have evil counsellors; and evil counsellors may have the most mischievous influence,

ticipations. But since I have found that one of the very first acts of government was "A proclamation for the encouragement of piety and virtue, and for preventing of vice, profaneness, and immorality;" the transport of my mind would almost constrain me to put on the airs of a prophet; and, without my usual diffidence as to futurities, to foretel the increasing glories and felicities of the beginning administration.—Hail! desponding religion! Lift up thy drooping head, and triumph! Virtue, thou heaven-born exile! return to court. Young George invites thee: George declares himself thy early friend and patron, and promises "to distinguish persons of piety and virtue on all occasions by marks of royal favour."—Vice, thou triumphant monster! with all thy infernal train, retire, abscond, and fly to thy native hell! Young George forbids thee to appear at court, in the army, in the navy, or any of thy usual haunts, and rouses the powers of his kingdoms against thee. Sure this cannot be an empty flourish, at first appearance on the stage. Certainly this must be the honest declaration of a heart long a secret friend to religion and virtue; and now impatient of silence. And if so, what happy days are before us, when religion and George shall reign!

Aspice, venturo lætentur ut omnia sæclo!
Jam redit & Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna:
Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto———
Te Duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,
Irrita perpetua solvent formidine terras———
Pacatumque reges patriis virtutibus orbem.

Virg. Eclog. iv.

It is impossible to be calm under such a presage. Such a presage renders the blessings we shall receive under the reign of George the Third, almost as sure as those we have received under that of George the Second; and I am ready to retract all I have said above in the language of diffidence and uncertainty.

notwithstanding the wisdom and goodness of the sovereign.

But may not even this anxious contingency be productive of good, by exciting us more powerfully to the duty of Christians and good subjects?

Are the kingdoms of men forlorn outcast orphans, discarded by their heavenly Father; or independent self-sufficient sovereignties, capable of managing themselves by their own power and policy? Or are they not rather little provinces or districts of Jehovah's immense empire, in which he presides, and manages all their affairs? Are kings absolute and self-supported? Or are they not sustained by him who is the support of archangels? Does *the prayer of a righteous man avail much?* Or is it but empty breath, of no efficacy? A light much more obscure than that of christianity has enabled heathens to answer such questions as these. Since "then the most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men;" and since prayer is invested with (shall I dare assert it?) a kind of almighty importunity, shall we not often appear in the posture of petitioners at the throne of grace for our young king? In praying for this one great personage, we intercede not only for him, but for ourselves and millions on both sides the Atlantic; not only for individuals but for nations, for Europe and America, for the world! And may petitions of such immense import never languish into spiritless complimental formalities! May they exhaust all the vigour of our souls, and be always animated with the united ardours of devotion, patriotism, and loyalty.

As good subjects, whatever our present or future stations may be in society, or in whatever territory of his majesty's dominions we may act our part on the stage of life, let the principles of loyalty and liberty, let cheerful obedience to our king, and a disinterested love to our country; let that generous virtue, public spirit, inspire our hearts, and appear in all our conduct. Let us *be subject, not for wrath, but for conscience sake.* Let our obedience be, not a servile artifice to escape punishment; not the mercenary cringing of ambition or avarice; not the fulsome affected complaisance of flat-

tery; but the voluntary offering of an honest and sincere heart. Let this always be an essential part of our virtue, our religion, and whatever we esteem most sacred.

To you, my dear pupils, the hope, the joy, and the ornament of your country; who, if the wishes and expectations of your parents, your friends, your tutors, and the public, be accomplished, will yet make an important figure in life; to you I must particularly address myself on this melancholy occasion, with all the affectionate solicitude and earnestness of a father's heart; and while only my voice sounds in your ears, imagine you hear the voice of your other tutors, of the trustees of this institution, of your country and your God, inculcating upon you the same exhortation.

While I invite you to drop your filial tears over the sacred dust of our common father, who has hitherto cherished your tender years! I cannot but congratulate you once more upon your being coevals with George the Third; and that you will date your entrance upon public life so near the time of his accession to the royal seat of his ancestors. The happy subjects of George the Second will soon give place to you, and visit their beloved king in the mansions of the dead. But long may your king and you live, and many happy days may you see together!

You have a king, who has already taught you how to live, and recommended piety and virtue to you from the throne. Let this therefore be your first care. This will qualify you for both worlds, and render you at once good subjects to your earthly sovereign, and to his Master and yours in heaven. The Christian cannot but be a patriot. He, who loves all mankind, even his enemies, must certainly love his country. The Christian cannot but be a good subject. He who loves his neighbour as himself, must certainly love his sovereign: and he who *fears God* will not fail to *honour the king*.

Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. This, my dear youth, this is the great precept of christianity, which this day demands your attention. From this day cherish a public spirit, and dedicate yourselves to the service of your king and country. What-

ever character you may hereafter sustain, you will not be so insignificant as to be incapable of any service to your sovereign and fellow-subjects. Whether the health, the liberty and property, or the spiritual interests of mankind, be the object of your future profession; whether you choose the peaceful vale of retirement, or the busy scenes of active life, remember, you will still have connections with the throne. You are parts of that great community over which his majesty presides: and the good of the whole, as well as the ease, honour, and prosperity of his government, will in some measure depend upon your performing your parts well. Civil society is so complicated a sytem, and includes so many remote, as well as intimate connections, references and mutual dependencies, that the least irregularity or defect in the minutest spring, may disorder and weaken the whole machine. Therefore it becomes you to know your own importance to your king and country, that you may exert your influences in your respective spheres, to execute all his patriot designs. Let your literary acquisitions, your fortunes, and even your lives be sacred to him, when his royal pleasure demands them for the service of your country. This you must do; or turn rebels against your own hearts and consciences. I well know you cannot be disaffected, or even useless subjects from principle. Your education, both at home and in Nassau-Hall, has invincibly pre-engaged your inclination, your reason and your conscience, in favour of our incomparable constitution, and the succession in the Hanover-family: of liberty, the Protestant religion, and George the Third, which are inseparably united. Therefore act up to your principles, practise according to your political creed, and then my most benevolent wishes, nay the highest wishes of your king and fellow-subjects, will be amply accomplished in you. Then you will give the world an honourable and just specimen of the morals and politics inculcated in the College of New-Jersey; and convince them, that it is a seminary of loyalty, as well as learning and piety; a nursery for the state, as well as the church. Such may it always continue! You all concur in your cordial Amen.

SERMON LXI.

Religion and Patriotism the Constituents of a good Soldier *.

2 Sam. x. 12.

Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: And the Lord do that which seemeth him good.

AN hundred years of peace and liberty in such a world as this, is a very unusual thing; and yet our country has been the happy spot that has been distinguished with such a long series of blessings, with little or no interruption. Our situation in the middle of the British Colonies, and our separation from the French, those eternal enemies of liberty and Britons, on the one side by the vast Atlantic; and on the other by a long ridge of mountains, and a wide extended wilderness, have for many years been a barrier to us; and while other nations have been involved in war, we have not been alarmed with the sound of the trumpet, nor seen garments rolled in blood.

But now the scene is changed, now we begin to experience in our turn the fate of the nations of the earth. Our territories are invaded by the power and perfidy of France; our frontiers ravaged by merciless savages, and our fellow-subjects there murdered with all the horrid arts of Indian and Popish torture. Our general, unfortunately brave, is fallen, an army of 1500 choice men routed, our fine train of artillery taken, and all this (oh mortifying thought!) all this by four or five hundred dastardly, insidious barbarians!

These calamities have not come upon us without warnings. We were long ago apprized of the am-

* Preached to Captain Overton's Independent Company of Volunteers, raised in Hanover County, Virginia, Aug. 17, 1755.

bitious schemes of our enemies, and their motions to carry them into execution: and had we taken timely measures, they might have been crushed before they could have arrived at such a formidable height. But how have we generally behaved in such a critical time? Alas! our country has been sunk in a deep sleep: a stupid security has unmanned the inhabitants: they could not realize a danger at the distance of two or three hundred miles: they would not be persuaded that even French Papists could seriously design us an injury: and hence little or nothing has been done for the defence of our country in time, except by the compulsion of authority. And now when the cloud thickens over our heads, and alarms every thoughtful mind with its near approach, multitudes, I am afraid, are still dissolved in careless security, or enervated with an effeminate, cowardly spirit. When the melancholy news first reached us concerning the fate of our army, then we saw how natural it is for the presumptuous to fall into the opposite extreme of unmanly despondence and consternation; and how little men could do in such a panic for their own defence. We have also suffered our poor fellow-subjects in the frontier counties to fall a helpless prey to blood-thirsty savages, without affording them proper assistance, which as members of the same body politic they had a right to expect. They might as well have continued in a state of nature as be united in society, if in such an article of extreme danger they are left to shift for themselves. The bloody barbarians have exercised on some of them the most unnatural and leisurely tortures; and others they have butchered in their beds, or in some unguarded hour. Can human nature bear the horror of the sight! See yonder! the hairy scalps clotted with gore! the mangled limbs! Women ripped up! the heart and bowels still palpitating with life, and smoking on the ground! See the savages swilling their blood, and imbibing a more outrageous fury with the inhuman draught! Sure these are not men; they are not beasts of prey; they are something worse; they must be infernal furies in human shape. And have we tamely looked on, and suffered them to ex-

ercise these hellish barbarities upon our fellow-men, our fellow-subjects, our brethren! Alas! with what horror must we look upon ourselves, as being little better than accessaries to their blood!

And shall these ravages go on unchecked? Shall Virginia incur the guilt, and the everlasting shame of tamely exchanging her liberty, her religion, and her all, for arbitrary Gallic power, and for Popish slavery, tyranny, and massacree? Alas! are there none of her children, that enjoyed all the blessings of her peace, that will espouse her cause, and befriend her now in the time of her danger? Are Britons utterly degenerated by so short a remove from their mother-country? Is the spirit of patriotism entirely extinguished among us? And must I give thee up for lost, O my country! and all that is included in that important word! Must I look upon thee as a conquered, enslaved province of France, and the range of Indian savages? My heart breaks at the thought. And must ye, our unhappy brethren in our frontiers, must ye stand the single barriers of a ravaged country, unassisted, unbefriended, unpitied? Alas! must I draw these shocking conclusions?

No; I am agreeably checked by the happy, encouraging prospect now before me. Is it a pleasing dream? Or do I really see a number of brave men, without the compulsion of authority, without the prospect of gain, voluntarily associated in a company, to march over trackless mountains, the haunts of wild beasts, or fiercer savages, into an hideous wilderness, to succour their helpless fellow-subjects, and guard their country? Yes, gentlemen, I see you here upon this design; and were you all united to my heart by the most endearing ties of nature or friendship, I could not wish to see you engaged in a nobler cause; and whatever the fondness of passion might carry me to, I am sure my judgment would never suffer me to persuade you to desert it. You all generously put your lives in your hands; and sundry of you have nobly disengaged yourselves from the strong and tender ties that twine about the heart of a father, or a husband, to confine you at home in inglorious ease, and sneak-

ing retirement from danger, when your country calls for your assistance. While I have you before me, I have high thoughts of a Virginian; and I entertain the pleasing hope that my country will yet emerge out of her distress, and flourish with her usual blessings. I am gratefully sensible of the unmerited honour you have done me, in making choice of me to address you upon so singular and important an occasion: and I am sure I bring with me a heart ardent to serve you and my country, though I am afraid my inability, and the hurry of my preparations, may give you reason to repent your choice. I cannot begin my address to you with more proper words than those of a great general, which I have read to you: *Be of good courage, and play the men for* your *people, and for the cities of* your *God: and the Lord do what seemeth him good.*

My present design is, to illustrate and improve the sundry parts of my text, as they lie in order; which you will find rich in sundry important instructions, adapted to this occasion.

The words were spoken just before a very threatening engagement by Joab, who had long served under that pious hero king David, as the general of his forces, and had shewn himself an officer of true courage, conducted with prudence. The Ammonites, a neighbouring nation, had frequent hostilities with the Jews, had ungratefully offered indignities to some of David's courtiers whom he had sent to condole their king upon the death of his father, and congratulate his accession to the crown. Our holy religion teaches us to bear personal injuries without private revenge: but national insults and indignities ought to excite the public resentment. Accordingly, king David, when he heard that the Ammonites, with their allies, were preparing to invade his territories, and carry their injuries still farther, sent Joab his general, with his army, to repel them, and avenge the affronts they had offered his subjects. It seems, the army of the enemy were much more numerous than David's: their mercenaries from other nations were no less than 31,000 men: and no doubt the Ammonites themselves were a still greater

number. These numerous forces were disposed in the most advantageous manner, and surrounded Joab's men, that they might attack them both in flank and front at once, and cut them all off, leaving no way for them to escape. Prudence is of the utmost importance in the conduct of an army: and Joab, in this critical situation, gives a proof how much he was master of it, and discovers the steady composure of his mind while thus surrounded with danger. He divides his army, and gives one party to his brother Abishai, who commanded next to him, and the other he kept the command of himself, and resolves to attack the Syrian mercenaries, who seemed the most formidable; he gives orders to his brother in the mean time to fall upon the Ammonites; and he animates him with this noble advice: *Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people and the cities of our God,* which are now at stake: *And the Lord do what seemeth him good.*

Be of good courage, and let us play the men:—courage is an essential character of a good soldier:—not a savage ferocious violence:—not a fool-hardy insensibility of danger, or headstrong rashness to rush into it:—not the fury of inflamed passions, broke loose from the government of reason: but calm, deliberate, rational courage; a steady, judicious, thoughtful fortitude: the courage of a man, and not of a tyger: such a temper as Addison ascribes with so much justice to the famous Marlborough and Eugene:

> Whose courage dwelt not in a troubled flood
> Of mounting spirits, and fermenting blood;—But
> Lodg'd in the soul, with virtue over-rul'd,
> Inflam'd by reason, and by reason cool'd. *The Campaign.*

This is true courage, and such as we ought all to cherish in the present dangerous conjuncture. This will render men vigilant and cautious against surprizes, prudent and deliberate in concerting their measures, and steady and resolute in executing them. But without this they will fall into unsuspected dangers, which will strike them with wild consternation; they will

meanly shun dangers that are surmountable, or precipitantly rush into those that are causeless, or evidently fatal, and throw away their lives in vain.

There are some men who naturally have this heroic turn of mind. The wise Creator has adapted the natural genius of mankind with a surprising and beautiful variety to the state in which they are placed in this world. To some he has given a turn for intellectual improvement, and the liberal arts and sciences; to others a genius for trade; to others a dexterity in mechanics, and the ruder arts, necessary for the support of human life: the generality of mankind may be capable of tolerable improvements in any of these: But it is only they whom the God of Nature has formed for them, that will shine in them; every man in his own province. And as God well knew what a world of degenerate, ambitious, and revengeful creatures this is; as he knew that innocence could not be protected, property and liberty secured, nor the lives of mankind preserved from the lawless hands of ambition, avarice, and tyranny, without the use of the sword; as he knew this would be the only method to preserve mankind from universal slavery; he has formed some men for this dreadful work, and fired them with a martial spirit, and a glorious love of danger. Such a spirit, though most pernicious when ungoverned by the rules of justice and benevolence to mankind, is a public blessing when rightly directed: such a spirit, under God, has often mortified the insolence of tyrants, checked the encroachments of arbitrary power, and delivered enslaved and ruined nations: it is as necessary in its place for our subsistence in such a world as this, as any of the gentler geniuses among mankind; and it is derived from the same divine original. He that winged the imagination of an Homer or a Milton; he that gave penetration to the mind of Newton; he that made Tubal-Cain an instructor of artificers in brass and iron*, and gave skill to Bezaleel and Aholiah in curious works †; nay, he that sent out Paul and his brethren to conquer the nations with the gentler wea-

* Gen. iv. 22. † Exod. xxxv. 30, 31, &c.

pons of Plain Truth, miracles, and the love of a crucified Saviour; he, even that same gracious power, has formed and raised up an Alexander, a Julius Cæsar, a William*, and a Marlborough, and inspired them with this enterprising, intrepid spirit; the two first to scourge a guilty world, and the two last to save nations on the brink of ruin. There is something glorious and inviting in danger to such noble minds; and their breasts beat with a generous ardour when it appears.

Our continent is like to become the seat of war, and we, for the future (till the sundry European nations that have planted colonies in it, have fixed their boundaries by the sword) have no other way left to defend our rights and privileges. And has God been pleased to diffuse some sparks of this martial fire through our country? I hope he has: and though it has been almost extinguished by so long a peace, and a deluge of luxury and pleasure, now I hope it begins to kindle: and may I not produce you, my brethren, who are engaged in this expedition, as instances of it†? Well, cherish it as a sacred heaven-born fire; and let the injuries done to your country administer fuel to it; and kindle it in those breasts where it has been hitherto smothered or inactive.

Though nature be the true origin of military courage, and it can never be kindled to a high degree where there is but a feeble spark of it innate; yet there are sundry things that may improve it even in minds full of natural bravery, and animate those who are naturally of an effeminate spirit to behave with a tolerable degree of resolution and fortitude in the defence of their country.—I need not tell you that it is of great importance for this end that you should be at peace with God and your own conscience, and prepared for your future state. Guilt is naturally timorous, and often struck into a panic even with imaginary dangers;

* King William the Third, the deliverer of Britain from Popery and Slavery, and the scourge of France and her haughty Grand Monarque.

† As a remarkable instance of this, I may point out to the public that heroic youth Col. Washington, whom I cannot but hope Providence has hitherto preserved in so signal a manner, for some important service to his country.

and an infidel courage, proceeding from want of thought, or a stupid carelessness about our welfare through an immortal duration beyond the grave, is very unbecoming a man or a christian. The most important periods of our existence, my brethren, lie beyond the grave; and it is a matter of much more concern to us what will be our doom in the world to come than what becomes of us in this. We are obliged to defend our country: and that is a sneaking, sordid soul indeed that can desert it at such a time as this: but this is not all; we are also obliged to take care of an immortal soul; a soul that must exist, and be happy or miserable through all the revolutions of eternal ages. This should be our first care; and when this is secured, death in its most shocking forms is but a release from a world of sin and sorrows, and an introduction into everlasting life and glory. But how can this be secured? Not by a course of impenitent sinning; not by a course of stupid carelessness and inaction; but by vigorous and resolute striving; by serious and affectionate thoughtfulness about our condition, and by a conscientious and earnest attendance upon the means that God has graciously appointed for our recovery. But "we are sinners, heinous sinners against a God of infinite purity and inexorable justice." Yes, we are so; and does not the posture of penitents then become us? Is not repentance, deep, broken-hearted repentance, a duty suitable to persons of our character? Undoubtedly it is: and therefore, O my countrymen, and particularly you brave men that are the occasion of this meeting, Repent: fall down upon your knees before the provoked Sovereign of heaven and earth, against whom you have rebelled. Dissolve and melt in penitential sorrows at his feet; and he will tell you, *Arise, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.* "But will repentance make atonement for our sins? Will our tears wash away their guilt? Will our sorrows merit forgiveness?" No, my brethren, after you have done all, you are but unprofitable servants: after all your sorrows, and prayers, and tears, you deserve to be punished as obnoxious criminals: that would be a sorry

government indeed, where repentance, perhaps extorted by the servile fear of punishment, would make atonement for every offence. But *I bring you glad tidings of great joy; to you is born a Saviour*, a Saviour of no mean character; he is Christ the Lord. And have you never heard that he has *made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness; that he suffered, the just for the unjust; that God is well-pleased for his righteousness-sake*, and declares himself willing to be reconciled to all that believe in him, and cheerfully accept him as their Saviour and Lord. Have you never heard these joyful tidings, O guilty, self-condemned sinners? Sure you have. Then away to Jesus, away to Jesus, ye whose consciences are loaded with guilt; ye whose hearts fail within you at the thoughts of death, and the tribunal of divine justice; ye who are destitute of all personal righteousness to procure your pardon, and recommend you to the Divine Favour: fly to Jesus on the wings of faith, all of you, of every age and character; for you all stand in the most absolute need of him; and without him you must perish every soul of you. But, alas! we find ourselves utterly unable to repent and fly to Jesus: our hearts are hard and unbelieving; and if the work depend upon us, it will for ever remain undone. True, my brethren, so the case is; but do ye not know that this guilty earth is under the distillings of divine grace, that Jesus is intrusted with the influences of the Spirit, which can *work in you both to will and to do;* and that he is willing to *give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* If you know this, you know where to go for strength; therefore cry mightily to God for it. This I earnestly recommend to all my hearers, and especially to you, gentlemen, and others, that are now about generously to risque your lives for your country. Account this the best preparative to encounter danger and death; the best incentive to true, rational courage. What can do you a lasting injury while you have a reconciled God smiling upon you from on high, a peaceful conscience animating you within, and a happy immortality just before you! sure you may bid defiance to dangers and death in their most shocking forms. You

have answered the end of this life already by preparing for another: and how can you depart off this mortal stage more honourably, than in the cause of liberty, of religion, and your country? But if any of you are perplexed with gloomy fears about this important affair, or conscious you are entirely unprepared for eternity, what must you do? Must you seek to prolong your life, and your time for preparation, by mean or unlawful ways, by a cowardly desertion of the cause of your country, and shifting for your little selves, as though you had no connection with society? Alas! this would but aggravate your guilt, and render your condition still more perplexed and discouraging. Follow the path of duty wherever it leads you, for it will be always the safest in the issue. Diligently improve the time you have to make your calling and election sure, and you have reason to hope for mercy, and grace to help in such a time of need.—You will forgive me, if I have enlarged upon this point, even to a digression; for I thought it of great consequence to you all. I shall now proceed with more haste.

It is also of great importance to excite and keep up our courage in such an expedition, that we should be fully satisfied we engage in a righteous cause—and in a cause of great moment; for we cannot prosecute a suspected, or a wicked scheme, which our own minds condemn, but with hesitation, and timorous apprehensions; and we cannot engage with spirit and resolution in a trifling scheme, from which we can expect no consequences worth our vigorous pursuit. This Joab might have in view in his heroic advice to his brother; *Be of good courage*, says he, *and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God. q. d.* We are engaged in a righteous cause; we are not urged on by an unbounded lust of power or riches, to encroach upon the rights and properties of others, and disturb our quiet neighbours: we act entirely upon the defensive, repel unjust violence, and avenge national injuries; we are fighting *for our people, and for the cities of our God.* We are also engaged in a cause of the utmost importance. We fight for our people; and what endearments are included in that significant word!

our liberty, our estates, our lives! our king, our fellow-subjects, our venerable fathers, our tender children, the wives of our bosom, our friends, the sharers of our souls, our posterity to the latest ages! and who would not use his sword with an exerted arm when these lie at stake? But even these are not all: we fight *for the cities of our God.* God has distinguished us with a religion from heaven; and hitherto we have enjoyed the quiet and unrestrained exercise of it: he has condescended to be a God to our nation, and to honour our cities with his gracious presence, and the institutions of his worship, the means to make us wise, good, and happy: but now these most invaluable blessings lie at stake; these are the prizes for which we contend; and must it not excite all our active powers to the highest pitch of exertion? Shall we tamely submit to idolatry and religious tyranny? No, God forbid: *let us play the men,* since we take up arms for our people, and the cities of our God.

I need not tell you how applicable this advice, thus paraphrased, is to the design of the present associated company. The equity of our cause is most evident. The Indian savages have certainly no right to murder our fellow-subjects, living quiet and inoffensive in their habitations; nor have the French any power to hound them out upon us, nor to invade the territories belonging to the British crown, and secured to it by the faith of treaties. This is a clear case: and it is equally clear, that you are engaged in a cause of the utmost importance. To protect your brethren from the most bloody barbarities—to defend the territories of the best of kings against the oppression and tyranny of arbitrary power—to secure the inestimable blessings of liberty, British liberty, from the chains of French slavery—to preserve your estates, for which you have sweat and toiled, from falling a prey to greedy vultures, Indians, priests, friars, and hungry Gallic slaves, or not more devouring flames—to guard your religion, the pure religion of Jesus, streaming uncorrupted from the sacred fountain of the scriptures; the most excellent, rational, and divine religion that ever was made known to the sons of men; to guard so dear, so precious a religion (my heart

grows warm while I mention it) against ignorance, superstition, idolatry, tyranny over conscience, massacre, fire and sword, and all the mischiefs beyond expression, with which Popery is pregnant—to keep from the cruel hands of Barbarians and Papists your wives, your children, your parents, your friends—to secure the liberties conveyed to you by your brave forefathers, and bought with their blood, that you may transmit them uncurtailed to your posterity—These are the blessings you contend for; all these will be torn from your eager grasp, if this colony should become a province of France. And Virginians! Britons! Christians! Protestants! if these names have any import or energy, will you not strike home in such a cause! Yes, this view of the matter must fire you into men; methinks the cowardly soul must tremble, lest the imprecation of the prophet fall upon him, *Cursed be the man that keepeth back his sword from blood.* To this shocking, but necessary work, the Lord now calls you, and *cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully;* that will not put his hand to it when it is in his power, or that will not perform it with all his might. Jer. xlviii. 10. The people of Meroz lay at home in ease, while their brethren were in the field, delivering their country from slavery. And what was their doom? *Curse ye Meroz,* said the angel of the Lord, *curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.* Judges v. 23. I count myself happy that I see so many of you generously engaged in such a cause; but when I view it in this light, I cannot but be concerned that there are so few to join you. Are there but fifty or sixty persons in this large and populous country that can be spared from home for a few weeks upon so necessary a design, or that are able to bear the fatigues of it? Where are the friends of human nature, where the lovers of liberty and religion? Now is the time for you to come forth, and shew yourselves. Nay, where is the miser? let him arise and defend his Mammon, or he may soon have reason to cry out with Micah, *They have taken away my gods, and what have I more?* Where is the tender

soul, on whom the passions of a husband, a father, or a son, have a peculiar energy? Arise, and march away; you had better be absent from those you love for a little while, than see them butchered before your eyes, or doomed to eternal poverty and slavery. The association now forming is not yet complete; and if it were, it would be a glorious thing to form another. Therefore, as an advocate for your king, your fellow-subjects, your country, your relatives, your earthly all, I do invite and intreat all of you, who have not some very sufficient reason against it, voluntarily to enlist, and go out with those brave souls, who have set you so noble an example. It will be more advantageous to you to go out in time, and more honourable to go out as volunteers, than be compelled to it by authority, when perhaps it may be too late.

The consideration of the justice and importance of the cause may also encourage you to hope that the Lord of hosts will espouse it, and render its guardians successful, and return them in safety to the arms of their longing friends. The event however is in his hands; and it is much better there than if it were in yours. This thought is suggested with beautiful simplicity, in the remaining part of my text, *the Lord do that which seemeth him good.* This may be looked upon in various views; as,

1. It may be understood as the language of uncertainty, and modesty. *q. d.* Let us do all we can; but after all, the issue is uncertain; we know not, as yet, to what side God will incline the victory. Such language as this, my brethren, becomes us in all our undertakings; it sounds creature-like, and God approves of such self-diffident humility. But to indulge sanguine and confident expectations of victory, to boast when we put on our armour, as though we were putting it off, and to derive our high hopes from our own power and good management, without any regard to the providence of God, this is too lordly and assuming for such feeble mortals; such insolence is generally mortified; and such a haughty spirit is the fore-runner of a fall. Therefore, though I do not apprehend your

lives will be in any great danger in your present expedition to range the frontiers, and clear them of the skulking Indians; yet, I would not flatter you, my brethren, with too high hopes either of victory or safety. I cannot but entertain the pleasing prospect of congratulating you with many of your friends, upon your successful expedition, and safe return: and yet it is very possible our next interview may be in that strange untried world beyond the grave. You are, however, in the hands of God, and he will deal with you *as it seemeth him good:* and I am persuaded you would not wish it were otherwise; you would not now practically retract the petition you have so often offered up, *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*

2. This language, *the Lord do as seemeth him good,* may be looked upon as expressive of a firm persuasion that the event of war entirely depends upon the providence of God. *q. d.* Let us do our best; but after all, let us be sensible that the success does not depend on us; that is entirely in the hands of an all-ruling God. That God governs the world, is a fundamental article of natural as well as revealed religion: it is no great exploit of faith to believe this: it is but a small advance beyond atheism and downright infidelity. I know no country upon earth where I should be put to the expence of argument to prove this. The heathens gave striking proofs of their belief of it, by their prayers, their sacrifices, their consulting oracles, before they engaged in war; and by their costly offerings and solemn thanksgivings after victory. And shall such a plain principle as this be disputed in a Christian land! No; we all speculatively believe it; but that is not enough; let our spirits be deeply impressed with it, and our lives influenced by it: let us live in the world as in a territory of Jehovah's empire. Carry this impression upon your hearts into the wilderness, whither you are going. Often let such thoughts as these recur to your minds: I am the feeble creature of God; and blessed be his name, I am not cast off his hand as a disregarded orphan to shift for myself. My life is under his care; the success of this expedition is at his disposal. Therefore, O thou all-ruling God, I

implore thy protection; I confide in thy care; I cheerfully resign myself, and the event of this undertaking, to thee. Which leads me to observe,

3. That these words, *the Lord do what seemeth him good*, may express a humble submission to the disposal of Providence, let the event turn out as it would. *q. d.* We have not the disposal of the event, nor do we know what it will be: but Jehovah knows, and that's enough: we are sure he will do what is best, upon the whole; and it becomes us to acquiesce: Thus, my friends, do you resign and submit yourselves to the Ruler of the world in the present enterprize: He will order matters as he pleases; O! let him do so by your cheerful consent. Let success or disappointment, let life or death be the issue, still say, *Good is the will of the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good:* or if nature biasses your wishes and desires to the favourable side, as no doubt it will, still keep them within bounds, and restrain them in time, saying, after the example of Christ, *Not my will, but thine be done.* You may wish, you may pray, you may strive, you may hope for a happy issue; but you must submit; *be still, and know that he is God*, and will not be prescribed to, or suffer a rival in the government of the world he has made. Such a temper will be of unspeakable service to you, and you may hope God will honour it with a remarkable blessing: for submission to his will is the readiest way to the accomplishment of our own.

4. These words, in their connection, may intimate, that let the event be what it will, it will afford us satisfaction, to think that we have done the best we could. *q. d.* We cannot command success; but let us do all in our power to obtain it, and we have reason to hope that in this way we shall not be disappointed: but if it should please God to render all our endeavours vain, still we shall have the generous pleasure to reflect that we have not been accessary to the ruin of our country, but have done all we could for its deliverance. So you, my brethren, have generously engaged in a disinterested scheme for your king and country: God does generally crown such noble undertakings with success, and you have encouragement to hope for it:

but the cause you have espoused is the cause of a sinful impenitent country; and if God, in righteous displeasure, should on this account blast your attempt, still you will have the pleasure of reflecting upon your generous views and vigorous endeavours, and that you have done your part conscientiously.

Having thus made some cursory remarks upon the sundry parts of the text, I shall now conclude with an address, first to you all in general, and then to you, gentlemen and others, who have been pleased to invite me to this service. I hope you will forgive my prolixity; my heart is full, the text is copious, and the occasion singular and important. I cannot therefore dismiss you with a short hurrying discourse.

It concerns you all seriously to reflect upon your own sins, and the sins of your land, which have brought all these calamities upon us. If you believe that God governs the world, if you do not abjure him from being the Ruler of your country, you must acknowledge that all the calamities of war, and the threatening appearances of famine, are ordered by his providence; there is no evil in a city or country, but the Lord hath done it. And if you believe that he is a just and righteous Ruler, you must also believe, that he would not thus punish a righteous or a penitent people. We and our countrymen are sinners, aggravated sinners: God proclaims that we are such by his judgments now upon us, by withering fields and scanty harvests, by the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war. Our consciences must also bear witness to the same melancholy truth. And if my heart were properly affected, I would concur with these undoubted witnesses; I would cry aloud, and not spare; I would lift up my voice like a trumpet, to shew you your transgressions and your sins. O my country, is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite? Where is there a more sinful spot to be found upon our guilty globe? Pass over the land, take a survey of the inhabitants, inspect into their conduct, and what do you see? what do you hear? You see gigantic forms of vice braving the skies, and bidding defiance to heaven and earth, while religion and virtue is obliged to retire, to avoid public contempt

and insult:—You see herds of drunkards swilling down their cups, and drowning all the man within them: You hear the swearer venting his fury against God and man, trifling with that name which prostrate angels adore, and imprecating that damnation, under which the hardiest devil in hell trembles and groans: You see Avarice hoarding up her useless treasures, dishonest Craft planning her schemes of unlawful gain, and Oppression unmercifully grinding the face of the poor: You see Prodigality squandering her stores, Luxury spreading her table, and unmanning her guests; Vanity laughing aloud, and dissolving in empty unthinking mirth, regardless of God, and our country, of time and eternity; Sensuality wallowing in brutal pleasures, and aspiring with inverted ambition, to sink as low as her four-footed brethren of the stall: You see cards more in use than the Bible, the backgammon table more frequented than the table of the Lord, plays and romances more read than the history of the blessed Jesus. You see trifling and even criminal diversions become a serious business; the issue of a horse-race, or a cock-fight, more anxiously attended to than the fate of our country; or where these grosser forms of vice and vanity do not shock your senses, even there you often meet with the appearances of more refined impiety, which is equally dangerous: You hear the conversation of reasonable creatures, of candidates for eternity, engrossed by trifles, or vainly wasted on the affairs of time: these are the eternal subjects of conversation, even at the threshold of the house of God, and on the sacred hours devoted to his service: You see swarms of prayerless families all over our land; ignorant, vicious children, unrestrained and untaught by those to whom God and nature hath entrusted their souls: You see thousands of poor slaves in a Christian country, the property of Christian masters, as they will be called, almost as ignorant of Christianity as when they left the wilds of Africa: You see the best religion in all the world abused, neglected, disobeyed, and dishonoured by its professors; and you hear infidelity scattering her ambiguous hints and suspicions, or openly attacking the Christian cause with pretended

argument, with insult and ridicule: You see crowds of professed believers, that are practical atheists; nominal Christians, that are real heathens; many abandoned slaves of sin, that yet pretend to be the servants of the holy Jesus. You see the ordinances of the gospel neglected by some, profaned by others, and attended upon by the generality with a trifling irreverence, and studied unconcernedness. Alas! who would think that those thoughtless assemblies we often see in our places of worship, are met for such solemn purposes as to implore the pardon of their sins from an injured God, and to prepare for an awful all important eternity! Alas! is that religion, for the propagation of which the Son of God laboured, and bled, and died; for which his apostles and thousands of martyrs have spent their strength and shed their blood, and on which our eternal life depends—is that religion become such a trifle in our days, that men are hardly serious and in earnest when they attend upon its most solemn institutions? What multitudes lie in a dead sleep in sin all around us! You see them eager in the pursuit of the vanities of time, but stupidly unconcerned about the important realities of the eternal world just before them: few solicitous what shall become of them when all their connections with earth and flesh must be broken, and they must take their flight into strange unknown regions: few lamenting their sins: few crying for mercy and a new heart: few flying to Jesus, or justly sensible of the importance of a Mediator in a religion for sinners. You may indeed see some degree of civility and benevolence towards men, and more than enough of cringing complaisance of worms to worms, of clay to clay, of guilt to guilt: but Oh! how little sincere homage, how little affectionate veneration for the great Lord of heaven and earth! You may see something of duty to parents, of gratitude to benefactors, and obedience to superiors: but if God be a Father, where is his honour? If he be a Master, where is his fear? If he be our Benefactor, where is our gratitude to him! You may see here and there some instances of proud, self-righteous virtue, some appearances of morality: but Oh! how rare is vital, evange-

lical religion, and true Christian morality, animated with the love of God, proceeding from a new heart, and a regard to the divine authority, full of Jesus, full of a regard to him as a Mediator, on whose account alone our duties can find acceptance! O blessed Redeemer! what little necessity, what little use do the sinners of our country find for thee in their religion! How many discourses are delivered, how many prayers offered, how many good works are performed, in which there is scarce any thing of Christ! And this defect renders them all but shining sins, glittering crimes. How few pant and languish for thee, blessed Jesus! and can never be contented with their reformation, with their morality, with their good works, till they obtain an interest in thy righteousness, to sanctify all, to render all acceptable!—You may see children sensible of their dependence on their parents for their subsistence; you see multitudes sensible of their dependence on clouds and sun, and earth for provision for man and beast: but how few sensible of their dependence upon God, as the great Original, the *primum mobile* of natural causes, and the various wheels of the universe! You see even the dull ox knows his owner, and the stupid ass his master's crib: you see the workings of gratitude even in your dog, who welcomes you home with a thousand fondling motions: but how is Jehovah's government and agency practically denied in his own territories! How few receive the blessings of life as from his hand, and make him proper returns of gratitude! You see a withering, ravaged country around you, languishing under the frowns of an angry God; but how few earnest prayers, how few penitential groans do you hear! Pass over the land, and bring me intelligence, is not this the general character of our country! I know there are some happy exceptions; and I hope sundry such might be produced from among you: but is not this the prevailing character of a great majority? Does not one part or other of it belong to the generality? The most generous charity cannot hope the contrary, if under any scriptural or rational limitations. May it not be said of the men of Virginia, as well as those of Sodom, *they are wicked, and sin-*

ners before the Lord exceedingly? And thus, alas! it has been for a long time: our country has sinned on securely for above one hundred and fifty years; and one age has improved upon the vices of another. And can a land always bear up under such a load of accumulated wickedness? Can God always suffer such a race of sinners to go on unpunished from generation to generation? May we not fear that our iniquities are now just full, and that he is about to thunder out his awful mandate to the executioners of his vengeance, *Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe; come get ye down, for the press is full, the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.*

And is there no relief for a sinking country? Or is it too late to administer it? Is our wound incurable, that refuseth to be healed? No, blessed be God; if you now turn every one of you from your evil ways, if you mourn over your sins, and turn to the Lord with your whole hearts, then your country will yet recover. God will appear for us, and give a prosperous turn to our affairs; he has assured us of this in his own word, *At what instant*, says he, *I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.* Jer. xviii. 7, 8. Therefore, my brethren, as we have all rebelled, let us all join in unanimous repentance, and a thorough reformation. Not only your eternal salvation requires it, but also the preservation of your country, that is now bleeding with the wounds you have given it by your sins. The safety of these our friends, who are now engaged in so generous a design, requires it: for an army of saints or of heroes, cannot defend a guilty, impenitent people, ripe for the Judgments of God. If you would be everlastingly happy, and escape the vengeance of eternal fire, or (to mention what may perhaps have more weight with some of you) if you would preserve yourselves, your families, your posterity from poverty, from slavery, ignorance, idolatry, torture and death; if you would save yourselves and them from all the infernal horrors

of popery, and the savage tyranny of a mongrel race of French and Indian conquerors: in short, if you would avoid all that is terrible, and enjoy every thing that is dear and valuable, repent and turn to the Lord. This is the only cure for our wounded country; and if you refuse to administer it in time, prepare to perish in its ruins. If you go on impenitent in sin, you may expect not only to be damned for ever, but (what is more terrible to some of you) to fall into the most extreme outward distress. You will have reason to fear not only the loss of heaven, which some of you perhaps think little of, but the loss of your estates, that lie so near your hearts. And will you not repent, when you are pressed to it from so many quarters at once?

And now, my brethren, in the last place, I have a few parting words to offer to you who are more particularly concerned on this occasion; and I am sure I shall address you with as much affectionate benevolence as you could wish.

My first and leading advice to you is, Labour to conduct this expedition in a religious manner. Methinks this should not seem strange counsel to creatures entirely dependent upon God, and at his disposal. As you are an independent company of volunteers under officers of your own chusing, you may manage your affairs more according to your own inclinations than if you had enlisted upon the ordinary footing: and I hope you will improve this advantage for the purposes of religion. Let prayer to the God of your life be your daily exercise. When retirement is safe, pour out your hearts to him in secret; and when it is practicable, join in prayer together morning and evening in your camp. How acceptable to Heaven must such an unusual offering be, from that desart wilderness! Maintain a sense of divine Providence upon your hearts, and resign yourselves and all your affairs into the hands of God. You are engaged in a good cause, the cause of your people, and the cities of your God! and therefore you may the more boldly commit it to him, and pray and hope for his blessing. I would fain hope there is no necessity to take precautions against vice among

such a select company: but lest there should, I would humbly recommend it to you to make this one of the articles of your association, before you set out. That every form of vice shall be severely discountenanced; and if you think proper, expose the offender to some pecuniary or corporal punishment. It would be shocking indeed, and I cannot bear the thought, that a company formed upon such generous principles, should commit or tolerate open wickedness among them; and I hope this caution is needless to you all, as I am sure it is to sundry of you.

And now, my dear friends, and the friends of your neglected country, *In the name of the Lord lift up your banners; be of good courage, and play the men for the people and the cities of your God: and the Lord do what seemeth him good.* Should I now give vent to the passions of my heart, and become a speaker for my country, methinks I should even overwhelm you with a torrent of good wishes, and prayers from the hearts of thousands. May the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, go forth along with you! *May he teach your hands to war, and gird you with strength to battle!* May he bless you with a safe return and long life, or a glorious death in the bed of honour, and a happy immortality! May he guard and support your anxious families and friends at home, and return you victorious to their longing arms! May all the blessings your hearts can wish attend you wherever you go! These are wishes and prayers of my heart; and thousands concur in them: and we cannot but cheerfully hope they will be granted, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERMON LXII.

The Crisis: or, the uncertain Doom of Kingdoms at particular Times *.

JONAH iii. 9.

Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not!

A STATE of uncertainty, a suspense between hope and fear about a matter of importance, is a very painful and anxious state. And by how much the more important and interesting the matter, by so much the more distressing is the uncertainty. Now what can be more important, what more interesting, than our country! Our country is a word of the highest and most endearing import: it includes our friends and relatives, our liberty, our property, our religion: in short, it includes our earthly all. And when the fate of our country, and all that it includes, is dreadfully doubtful; when we are tossed and agitated betwixt the alternate waves of hope and fear; when, upon taking a view of the present posture of our affairs, we can only ask with painful solicitude, *what will be the end of these things?* and when even the consideration of the divine mercy upon our repentance cannot give us any assurance of deliverance in a political capacity, but only a peradventure, *who can tell but God will turn and repent!* when this, I say, is our situation, every mind that has the least thought, must be agitated with many eager dubious expectations. This is the present situation of our country; and this was the state of that populous and magnificient city of Nineveh, when the words of my text were first spoken.

* Preached at Hanover, in Virginia, 28 Oct. 1756, being the day appointed by the Synod of New York, to be observed as a general fast, on account of the present war with France.

Nineveh was the metropolis of the Assyrian empire: and how prodigiously populous it was, you may calculate from hence, that it contained more than six score thousand children, that were so young, that they could not distinguish the right hand from the left: and the number of adults, in proportion to these, must be vast indeed. Its extent was no less than three days journey. Profane authors tell us, it was forty-seven miles in circumference; and that, notwithstanding its vast extent, it was surrounded with lofty walls and towers: the walls two hundred feet high, and so very wide, that three chariots might drive on them a-breast: and the towers two hundred feet in height, and fifteen hundred in number. But what became of this mighty Nineveh at last? Alas! it was turned into an heap of rubbish. Divine patience was at length wearied out; and, though the vengeance denounced by Jonah was suspended, yet that foretold by Nahum was dreadfully executed.

And what was the cause of this execution, and that denunciation? The cause of both was sin; national, epidemical sin, against an unknown God, the God of Israel; I say, against an unknown God: for Nineveh was an heathen city, not favoured with the knowledge of the true God by supernatural revelation; much less with the gospel, that most perfect dispensation of divine grace towards the sons of men. The Ninevites could not sin with such horrid aggravations as we; and yet even they could sin to such a degree, as to become utterly intolerable. They sinned against the light of nature, and that sufficed to bring down remediless destruction upon them. This is mentioned as the cause of the divine displeasure, in Jonah's commission. *Arise go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me*, Jonah i. 2.: their wickedness has reached to heaven; and can no longer be endured. But before the fatal blow fall, let them have one warning more—Oh! how astonishing are the grace and patience of God towards a guilty people! Even when their wickedness has scaled the heavens, and come up before him, he condescends to give them another warning, and suspends the blow for

at least forty days longer, to see if they will at length repent.

Jonah, having tried in vain to disengage himself from the message, is at length constrained to undertake it; and with the solemn and awful gait of a prophet, he walks from street to street, making this alarming proclamation: *Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown*: Jonah iii. 4. This was the substance of his sermon: but no doubt he spoke much more than is here recorded. No doubt, he produced his credentials from the God of Israel, and gave them the history of his reluctance to accept the commission; of the storm that pursued him, while attempting to make his escape; of his miraculous preservation in the belly of a fish, and his deliverance thence. No doubt, he also let them know what was the cause of the divine displeasure against them, viz. their national vices and irreligion; and he perhaps intimated, that repentance was the only possible method of escaping the threatened destruction. It is plain, however, they understood him in this sense; for they actually did repent; but whether it was from the light of nature, or from Jonah's preaching, they received this direction, does not appear*.

And now, while the prophet is delivering his message, their consciences tell them how ripe they are for this dreadful doom; and the Spirit of God, no doubt, concurs, and impresses the conviction upon their hearts. Now, methinks, I see eager gazing crowds following the prophet from street to street; paleness is in every countenance, and horror in every heart. Now the

* Upon second thoughts, it seems to me that God saw it most proper to be upon the reserve in this point; and that he did not reveal to Jonah his gracious design to pardon them upon their repentance; nor Jonah to the Ninevites.—That God did not reveal it to Jonah, seems probable from hence, that he had some expectation the city would be destroyed, though he saw their repentance: and hence he waited for the event, and was greatly chagrined when disappointed. He seemed indeed to have presumed what the event would be, from the known mercy and patience of God (chap. iv. 2.); but this implies, that he had no express revelation for it—That Jonah did not reveal this to the Ninevites, appears from my text, where they speak of the event as dreadfully uncertain, even though they should repent.

man of business remits his eager pursuits; the man of pleasure is struck with a damp in his thoughtless career: pride and grandeur lower their haughty airs; and a general horror spreads from the cottage to the throne. The people agree upon a public fast: and when the emperor hears of the awful message, he issues forth his royal edict, requiring an universal abstinence from food, and a deep repentance and reformation. He injoins all to put on sackcloth, the habit of mourners and penitents in those ages and countries; and, laying aside his royal robes, and descending from his throne, he puts on the mortifying dress himself, and lies in the dust. That the humiliation might be the more moving and affecting, he orders, according to the custom of the time upon such solemn occasions, that even the beasts, the flocks and herds, should be restrained from food, and compelled to join, as it were, with more guilty men, in the general humiliation, and in deprecating that vengeance which was about to fall upon man and beast.

We have now a very moving sight before us; a gay magnificent city in mourning; thousands mourning in every street: king and subjects, high and low, old and young, all covered in sackcloth, and rolling in ashes. And their repentance does not wholly consist in these ceremonies: the royal proclamation further requires them to *cry mightily unto God; and turn every one from his evil way.* They are sensible of the propriety and necessity of prayer, earnest prayer to God, and a reformation of life, as well as of afflicting themselves with fasting. The light of nature directed them to this as the only method of deliverance, if deliverance was possible. The case of such a people looks hopeful:—That so many thousands should be brought to repentance by one warning, the first and only warning they had ever received from a prophet of the true God; a prophet that was a contemptible stranger from the despised nation of the Jews; this certainly appears promising.

Alas! brethren, our countrymen are not so easily brought to repentance: No, this is not an easy thing among us. Ten thousand warnings, not only from

conscience, from divine providence, from this very Jonah, and the other prophets of the Old Testament, but also from the gospel, that clear and perfect revelation; I say, ten thousand warnings, thus peculiarly enforced, have not so much effect upon our country, this Christian, this Protestant country, as one short warning from the mouth of Jonah had upon a city of heathens and idolaters. All along as I have been considering this case, I could not cast out of my mind that dreadful declaration of Christ, *The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here.* Matt. xii. 41. Nineveh never had such loud calls to repentance, and such a rich plenty of all the means of grace, as Virginia. The meanest in the kingdom of heaven, *i. e.* the meanest Christian under the full revelation of the gospel, is greater in spiritual knowledge, not only than Jonah, but than John the Baptist, the greatest prophet that was ever born of a woman. And therefore, I may accommodate these words to us, *Behold, a greater than Jonas is here.* Here are clearer discoveries of the will of God, and stronger motives and encouragements to repentance, than ever Jonah could afford the men of Nineveh. But alas! where is our repentance! Where are our humiliation and reformation! Shall the light of nature, and one warning from a prophet, bring heathens to the knee before God; and shall not the gospel, and all its loud calls, have that effect upon a Christian land! Shall Nineveh repent in sackcloth and ashes; and shall Virginia sin on still, impenitent, thoughtless, luxurious and gay! Alas! what will be the end of this?

The case of the Ninevites, who were brought to repentance so readily, and so generally, looks hopeful, and seems to promise them an exemption from the threatened vengeance. And yet, so sensible was the king of Nineveh of their demerit, and the insufficiency of their repentance to make atonement for their sins, that he is doubtful, after all, what would be the consequence. *Who can tell,* says he; who knoweth, *if God will turn and repent, and turn away from the*

fierceness of his anger, that we perish not! q. d. Let us humble ourselves ever so low, we are not assured we shall escape: vengeance may, after all, seize us; and we may be made monuments to all the world of the justice of the King of kings, and the dreadful consequences of national impiety and vice. His uncertainty in this matter might proceed from the just sense he had of the intolerable height to which the national wickedness had arrived, and of the strictness of the divine justice. He knew that, even in his own government, it would have very bad consequences, if all crimes should be forgiven, or pass unpunished, upon the repentance of the offender: and he forms the same judgment concerning the divine government. Indeed, it is natural to a penitent, while he has a full view of his sins, in all their aggravations, and of the justice of God, to question whether such sins can be forgiven by so holy a God. He is apt even to fall into an extreme in this respect. It does not now appear so easy a thing to him to obtain a pardon, as it once did, when he had no just views of his guilt. Now, it appears a great thing indeed; so great, that he can hardly think it possible. Or the uncertainty of the king of Nineveh in this point might proceed from Jonah's being so reserved upon it. He might have had no commission from God to promise them deliverance upon their repentance; but he was to warn them, and then leave them in the hands of a gracious and righteous God, to deal with them according to his pleasure. This tended to make them more sensible that they lay at mercy, and that he might justly do what he pleased with them. The event indeed shewed there was a condition implied in the threatening; and that God did secretly intend to spare them, upon their repentance. But this was wisely concealed, and it was sufficient that the event should make it known. It is certain that national, as well as personal repentance, may sometimes come too late; and that sometimes the punishment may fall by way of chastisement, even when the repentance is sincere, and the sin is forgiven, so that it shall not bring on the destruction of the sinner in the eternal world. But we may well suppose, an

heathen monarch, who probably had no instruction but from Jonah's short warning, would be much at a loss about these things. From this uncertainty of his about the fate of his empire, we may infer this truth, which I intend to illustrate with regard to ourselves, *viz.*

That sometimes a nation may be in such a situation, that no man can tell what will be the issue; or whether it shall be delivered from the threatened vengeance, or destroyed.

But though the king of Nineveh was uncertain about this; yet, there was one thing that he was very certain of, viz. That if there was any possibility of escape, it was to be hoped for only in the way of earnest prayer to God, general humiliation, and reformation. This is evident from the connexion of the context. *Let man and beast*, says he, *be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God, yea, let them turn every one from his evil way:—Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not! i. e.* Who can tell but he may turn away from his fierce anger, in case we turn from our evil ways, and humble ourselves before him? If we do not reform, and humble ourselves, the case is dreadfully plain; any one can tell that we cannot escape; there is not so much as a peradventure for it; unavoidable destruction will be our doom, beyond all question. But if we repent, who knows what that may do? *Who knows but God may repent, and turn from the fierceness of his wrath?* If there be any hope at all, it is in this way. This he learned from the light of nature, if not from Jonah's preaching. And this suggests another seasonable truth, which, if my time will allow, I shall also illustrate, viz.

That when a nation is in such a state, that no man can certainly determine what will be its doom, if there be any possible hope, it is only in the way of general humiliation, earnest prayer, and public reformation.

To prevent mistakes, I have one thing more to observe upon the text; and that is, that when God is said to repent, it only signifies, that the visible conduct of divine Providence has some resemblance to the

conduct of men, when they repent; and not that he is capable of repentance in a proper sense, or of that changeableness, imperfect knowledge, sorrow, and self-accusation, which repentance among men implies. When men repent that they have made a thing, they destroy it; and therefore, when God destroyed man by a deluge, he is said to repent that he made him; and when he deposed Saul, it is said, he repented that he had made him king. When men do not execute their threatenings, it is supposed they repent of them; and hence, when God does not inflict the threatened evil, he is said to repent of the evil; *i. e.* he acts as men do, when they repent of their purpose; though when he made the denunciation, he well knew the event, and determined not to execute it, upon the repentance of the offenders. So with regard to Nineveh, there was no proper repentance in God, but an uniform consistent purpose. He purposed to denounce his vengeance against that city; and he did so: he purposed and foresaw their repentance; and it accordingly came to pass: he purposed to spare them upon their repentance; and he did so. All this is very consistent, and implies no proper repentance in God: for in this sense, *God is not a man, that he should repent,* Numb. xxiii. 19.; but *he is of one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doth,* Job xxiii. 13.

I now enter upon the illustration of the first inference upon the text, viz.

I. That sometimes a nation may be in such a situation, that no man can tell what will be their doom; whether the threatened vengeance will fall upon them, or whether they shall escape.

This, we have seen, was the situation of Nineveh, though now lying in deep repentance, and not in danger, as far as appears from any visible cause. Thousands were now mourning, praying, and reforming; and we have no account of an enemy preparing to invade them. And if Nineveh, in this situation, which seems so promising, was, notwithstanding, in such danger that no man could determine what would be their doom, alas! what shall we say of Virginia,

and the kingdoms to which we belong, when they are neither penitent before God, nor safe from the arms of a powerful and victorious enemy? If the repentance of the Ninevites gave them no assurance of escape, but only a peradventure, *Who can tell if God will turn from his fierce anger?* Certainly our doom must, at best, be equally uncertain, when, instead of repentance, reformation, and mighty crying to God, we see the generality impenitent, unreformed, and prayerless still? I would not damp you with unmanly fears; but I cannot help saying, that our doom is dismally uncertain. I know not what a provoked God intends to do with us and our nation. I have my hopes indeed; but they are balanced, and sometimes overbalanced, with fearful and gloomy apprehensions. But,

1. The issue of the present war will appear dreadfully uncertain, if we consider the present posture of affairs.

We are engaged in war with a powerful exasperated enemy; and blood is streaming by sea and land. Some decisive blow will probably be struck ere long: but on what party it will fall, and what will be the issue of this struggle and commotion among the nations, is an anxious uncertainty. It seems but too likely, though it strikes me with horror to admit the thought, that a provoked God intends to scourge us with the rod of France, and therefore gives surprising success to her arms. Who can tell, but the king of France may have the same commission given him by that God, whom we and our mother-country have so grievously offended, as was given to the Assyrian monarch, in Isaiah's time, when God speaks of him as his rod, to chastise his own people, and as acting by a commission from him, though he neither knew nor designed it, but only intended to gratify his own ambition? *O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand, is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation; and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so; neither doth*

his heart think so: but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off nations not a few. But at the same time it is foretold, That *when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks,* Isa. x. 5, 6, 7, 12. And if the same commission be given to the king of France, I doubt not but his end will be the same. When God has finished his work of correction with this rod, he will break it, or burn it in the fire. The like commission was given to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; and when he, and his son, and his son's son, had served as the executioners of God's wrath upon his people, and the neighbouring nations, they and the Babylonian empire, were destroyed together. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, because ye have not heard my words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant (my servant,* to execute this my work of correction, and of vengeance), *and I will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and I will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations. But it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished* (the space of time allotted for his power, and the correction of God's people), *that then will I punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.* (Jer. xxv. 8—14.) Thus you see it is no uncommon thing for God, when transgressions are come to the full, to raise up some power to perform his work of chastisement and vengeance, and render it victorious and irresistible, till that work is done, and then to crush it in its turn. And whether divine Providence is now about to employ the power of France for this purpose, is a dreadful uncertainty. We hope, indeed, matters will take a more favourable turn; but the present posture of affairs, and particularly the rapid conquests of that power, which is now become so formi-

dable even in America, give us reason to fear this may be the event, and that matters are now ripening fast for this terrible result.

I may add, that we have reason to fear from the disposition and conduct of many among ourselves, some in high places have been suspected of treachery or cowardice, or at least bad conduct. A spirit of security, sloth, and cowardice, evidently prevails; nothing great is so much as attempted, much less executed. We have also so many black foreigners among ourselves, as may justly alarm our fears. Now if the French should invade our frontiers; if the Indians, that are now neuter, or in the British interest, should join with them, and with those tribes that are already so active upon their side; and if their united forces should pour down upon us, and meet with a welcome reception and assistance from so powerful an enemy among ourselves; I say, should this be the case, I need not tell you what unexampled scenes of blood, cruelty, and devastation would open in our country. This may not be the event; and I hope and pray it may not: but it is not so improbable as we could wish; much less is it impossible. Who knows but this may actually be the consequence!

And if the natural allies of France should form a confederacy against our mother-country, and attack her with their united strength, how terrible would the consequences probably be, both to her and to us, especially if the Protestant powers should not vigorously concur with us against them! This event may not happen; and I hope and pray it may not: but it is not so unlikely as one could wish. But,

2. The event of the present war will appear dismally doubtful, if we consider some Scripture prophecies, particularly in Daniel and the Revelations.

I cannot pretend to enter deeply into this subject at present; a subject that has filled so many volumes, and employed the thoughts and pens of so many great men. It will be sufficient to my present purpose to observe,

(1.) That the idolatrous persecuting power of Popery, seated at Rome, is undoubtedly meant by the

little horn in Daniel (Dan. vii. 8.) that rose up out of the Roman empire, when it was divided into ten kingdoms by the barbarous nations that broke in upon it: an horn *which had a mouth, speaking great things; which made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;* an horn *which speaks great things against the Most High, and wears out the saints of the Most High; and thinks to change times and laws, i. e.* to alter and corrupt the ordinances of God. ver. 24, 25. The same idolatrous persecuting power is also intended in the Revelations, Rev. xiii. by *the beast with seven heads and ten horns, that had a mouth given him, speaking great things, and blasphemies: and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God,* &c. *and it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations; and all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life.* The same idolatrous and persecuting power is intended likewise by the woman (Rev. xvii.) *sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast, having seven heads, and ten horns; full of names of blasphemy, and drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.* Protestant commentators generally agree in this application of these prophecies to the Papal power; but I cannot take time to lay before you the full evidence upon which they proceed. However, I cannot but just observe, that the angel-interpreter expressly tells St. John, that this woman was that great city which then reigned over the kings of the earth, ver. xviii.; which undoubtedly means the city of Rome, that was then the seat of universal empire. But,

(2.) The time of the reign of this idolatrous and persecuting power is determined in prophetic numbers, both in Daniel and the Revelations. In Daniel, it is said, the saints shall be given into the hand of the horns until a time, times, and the dividing of time, Dan. vii. 25.; and that he shall scatter the power of the holy people for a time, times, and half a time. Dan. xii. 7. In the Revelations, we are told that the Church of Christ, represented by a woman, shall con-

tinue in the wilderness, *i. e.* in a state of oppression and persecution, under the Popish power, for a time, times, and half a time, Rev. xii. 14.; *that the outer court of the temple, and the holy* city, another emblem of the true church of Christ, *shall be given to the Gentiles, i. e.* subjected to a power no better than heathen, *and by them trodden under foot forty-two months;* that the church should be fed in the wilderness for *twelve hundred and sixty days*, Rev. xii. 6.; and *that the two witnesses, i. e.* the small remnant of the faithful who shall retain the purity of the gospel, and witness against the corruptions of the church of Rome, *shall prophesy twelve hundred and sixty days in sackcloth.* These are but different representations of the same period: and in order to understand them you are to observe, that in this calculation, a day signifies a year; and therefore twelve hundred and sixty days are twelve hundred and sixty years. A month consists of thirty such days, *i. e.* thirty years; for the months among the ancients were invariably made up of but thirty days, as their year consisted only of three hundred and sixty days. Now forty-two months, multiplied by thirty, just make twelve hundred and sixty years. So time signifies one year, times two years, and half a time, or the dividing of time, half a year: now one year and two years making three years, and the half year added to them make three years and a half. These three years and an half contain thrice three hundred and sixty years, and the half of three hundred and sixty (viz. one hundred and eighty) which make exactly twelve hundred and sixty years. So that all these calculations amount to the same thing, viz. twelve hundred and sixty years. This is undoubtedly the duration of the popish tyranny, and of the oppression of the saints, and the cause of truth. Now if we could find out when it began, whether when the Pope usurped and exercised the substance of ecclesiastical authority as universal bishop, which was in the fifth century; or when he was formally invested with that authority by the emperor Phocas, A. D. 606; or when he was made a secular prince, and had a civil authority added to his ecclesiastical, by Pipin king of France, A. D. 756;

I say, if we could find out when this space of twelve hundred and sixty years began, we could easily find out when it will end: and this would help us to determine what will be the event of the present war, whether the oppression of the Protestant cause, or the downfal of the bloody power of Popery that has undoubtedly held the world in ignorance, idolatry, and slavery, for above a thousand years. But after all the searches I can make, I am not able to form a certain determination upon the point; and commentators differ so widely among themselves, that I have received but little light from them. I must therefore leave you in that uncertainty, in which I am myself; and consequently destitute of light from these predictions concerning the event of the present war. But,

(3.) Though this period of twelve hundred and sixty years is to be, all through, a series of tyranny and persecution; and the cause of truth and its advocates are continually under oppression; yet there is a short space in this period, I suppose, from the calculation in the Revelation, Rev. xi. 9.; about three years and a half, in which the cause of truth shall seem entirely suppressed, and its friends utterly extinct; so that there will be no human probability of their revival, any more than of a human body that has lain dead three days and a half. And upon this the Popish powers shall exult and triumph, as if they had obtained an entire and lasting victory. This is probably the time referred to in Daniel (chap. xii. 1.) as *a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.* During the rest of the twelve hundred and sixty days, the witnesses prophesied in sackloth, in a state of mourning and persecution: but in this period they are killed; and their dead bodies lie, unburied and insulted, in the street of the great city, *i.e.* in the Roman territories: *and they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and send gifts one to another.* Rev. xi. 7—10. This is a melancholy time indeed for the few servants of Jesus Christ. And who can tell, whether it be past, or whether it be future, and the issue of the present war? I could easily lay before you the opinions of good and great men on

this point; but they are so various, that they could not bring you to any certain conclusion upon it. Some suppose it past; and that it was either a little before the Reformation, when the Albigenses and Waldenses, who had been witnesses for a long time against the corruptions of popery, were, in appearance, utterly extirpated by a series of bloody persecutions, at the Pope's instigation: and if this was the period, then the resurrection of the witnesses, and their being caught up into heaven, must signify the revival of their cause at the Reformation, and the raising up of Luther, Calvin, and other reformers, in the same spirit. Or, as others suppose, this melancholy time was about the year 1550, when the persecution raged in England under Queen Mary, and the civil wars in France, Germany, and the Low Countries, on account of religion, seemed to threaten the utter extinction of the Protestant cause. Those that suppose this time is past, have sundry arguments, that are at least plausible, to support their opinion; and if I have any opinion at all, in so doubtful a matter, I incline to this.

There are others, of no small judgment in such matters, that apprehend this melancholy period is yet to come; and they too have their reasons, which I cannot now mention. And if this be the case, who can tell but the melancholy time is now at hand, and that the present commotions in Europe are working up to it? This is certain, it will be introduced by war; for we are expressly told, that *when the two witnesses have finished their testimony, the beast shall make war against them, and shall overcome them and kill them*, Rev. xi. 7; and that just before the pouring out of the seventh tial, which shall utterly destroy the popish powers, and introduce the kingdom of Christ, the kings of the earth, by popish instigation, shall gather themselves together to the battle of the great day of God Almighty, in a place called Armageddon (Rev. xvi. 13, 14, 16.); or Megiddo, where good Josiah, the great reformer of the Jewish religion, was slain. *I saw the beast*, says St. John, *and the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, i. e.* against Jesus Christ and

his army. Rev. xix. 19. Popery will die hard, and its last struggles be very violent. It will collect all its forces, and make a bold push to recover its lost authority: and this will undoubtedly be attended with much slaughter. But whether it will be victorious in the first attack, and at this time slay the witnesses; or whether the Lamb and his army shall immediately prevail, as he certainly will at last*; this seems uncertain. Now who can tell, but the present war is the commencement of this grand decisive conflict between the Lamb and the beast, *i. e.* between the protestant and popish powers? The pope first received his principality and secular authority from Pipin, one of the kings of France: and there seems to be something congruous in it, that France should also take the lead, and be, as it were, the general of his forces in this last decisive conflict for the support of that authority. This is also remarkable, and almost peculiar to the present war, viz. That protestants and papists are not blended together in it by promiscuous alliances: but France and her allies are all papists; and Britain and her allies are all protestants; and consequently whatever party fall, the religion of that party is like to fall too. If France and her allies should prove victorious, then we may conclude the period for slaying the witnesses is just coming. But if Britain and her allies should be victorious, then we may conclude that time is past, and that the time is just come when it shall be proclaimed, *Babylon is fallen! is fallen!* but all this is uncertain, at least to me, till the event make it plain; and for that we must wait with anxious suspense.

But here I cannot help mentioning one thing, to mitigate your anxieties; and that is, that however bloody and desolating this last conflict may be, it will bring about the most glorious and happy revolution that ever was in the world. It will quite change the face of things, introduce *a new heaven and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell;* and it will new model the kingdoms of the world, *and they shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall*

* See the final issue of this grand decisive conflict, described in most lively terms, Rev. xix. from ver. 11. *ad fin.*

reign for ever, Rev. xi. 15.; then Satan shall be bound, and Christ shall reign in the hearts of men, a thousand years. How remarkable upon this head are the prophecies of Daniel, above two thousand year ago! *I beheld*, says he, *and the little horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them until the Ancient of Days came; i. e.* came to give dominion, and glory, and a kingdom to the Son of man, Dan. vii. 21, 22.; *and then judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.* ver. 13, 14.—They shall be uppermost in their turn, and be finally triumphant. All the other empires and kingdoms of the world have been subject to revolutions, passed from hand to hand, and at length fallen to pieces; but this, says Daniel, is *a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; a kingdom that shall not be left to other people; but it shall break to pieces and consume all the kingdoms that were before it, and it shall stand for ever.* Dan. ii. 44.—Hail, happy period! how long wilt thou delay? Lord Jesus, let thy kingdom come! let it come, though to make way for it, many thrones must totter that are now the supporters of Antichrist: let it come, though many kingdoms should be overturned, and many countries stream with blood; though we and millions more should be crushed in the grand revolution, See, brethren, the happy result of all the commotions that are, or have been, on this restless globe: see to what a glorious end they all tend! And who would not willingly live a while longer in this world of sin and sorrow, and share in the calamities of war, and all the plagues reserved for the latter times, if he may but see this blessed period! But if we should not be so happy as to see it with mortal eyes, such of us as *die in the Lord* shall receive the welcome intelligence of it in heaven, and rejoice in it as much as its proper subjects on earth.—You will forgive me, if I have dwelt too long upon this new and curious subject. I shall now proceed with more haste. Therefore,

3. The event of the present war, and the doom of our country and nation, will appear dreadfully uncertain if we consider our national guilt and impenitence.

Let Atheists and Epicureans say what they please, it is an eternal truth, which all the world will be made to know at last, that Jehovah is the Ruler of the universe; that the fate of kingdoms is in his hands; that he is the Sovereign Arbiter of war, and determines victory as he pleases. It is also certain that rewards and punishments are as essential to his government as they are to all other governments. In the world to come he will reward or punish individuals, according to their personal works; and in the present world he will reward or punish nations, according to their national work;—in the present world, I say, because it is only in the present world they subsist in a national capacity, and are capable of national rewards and punishments. Now there is a time, *when the transgressors are come to the full*, Dan. viii. 23.; when the measure of a people's iniquity is filled up, and they are ripe for vengeance. And then the executioners of divine vengeance, the sword, famine, pestilential diseases, earthquakes, and the like, are turned loose among them, then the dread commission is issued out, *Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, get ye down; for the press is full; the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.* Joel iii. 13. Then all the undertakings of such a people are blasted; and even the worst of the heathen (Ezek. vii. 24.) succeed against them. That nation is thrown off from the hinge on which empire turns, and therefore must fall. The Lord of armies is against them; and by a secret, but irresistible hand, brings on their destruction.

Now, whether that fatal period be arrived with respect to us and our nation, I will not determine; nor indeed am I capable: but I am sure it is not evident that it is not come: I am sure our land is full of sin against the Holy One of Israel. On this subject I have often enlarged; and now I am afraid, it is a trite disregarded tale. The sins of our land lie heavy upon it, the sins of all ranks and denominations; the sins of past and present generations; sins against the law, and against the gospel; sins against mercies, and against judgments; sins in heart, in language, in practice; sins of all kinds and degrees, and against all sorts

of obligations: Oh! what a huge heap, what an intolerable burden, do all these sins make! The sins of many millions on both sides the Atlantic! Our body politic is a huge mass of corruption! *the whole head is sick; and the whole heart faint: from the sole of the foot unto the head there is no soundness in it, but all full of wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores,* Isai. i. 6. And does not this leave our doom in a dreadful suspense? Who can tell what will be the fate of so guilty a people? Can we indulge high hopes with such a load of guilt upon us? Sin lies like a dead weight upon our counsels, our designs, and expeditions; and crushes all of them. What though our enemies be as wicked as ourselves, with only this exception, that they have not our advantages, and therefore cannot sin with our aggravations? But what if they were in all respects as bad? It has been no unusual thing for God to employ one guilty nation to execute his vengeance upon another; and when that drudgery is done (which by the by, is more properly devolved upon a hated nation than upon his people; he has more beneficent and agreeable work for them) I say, when that drudgery is done, he executes the executioner: just as one among a number of criminals may be appointed to execute the rest; and then is executed himself by some other hand. Thus God employed the Assyrians and Babylonians to punish his people, the Jews; and when they had, though undesignedly, done him that service, he punishes them in a yet severer manner. And thus he threatens the Jews by Ezekiel, that he would bring the worst of the heathen against them: they were good enough to be executioners. So he employs devils, the worst of beings, to execute his vengeance upon sinners in hell. And so in human governments, the refuse of mankind are appointed hangmen.

But though our land be so full of sin, yet there would be some ground to hope, could we see any appearances of a general repentance and reformation. But alas! where shall we find it? I have not been altogether a heedless observer of the effects of the corrective and vindictive providences of God towards our land, the

sword, a threatened famine, and a deadly raging distemper*. But I have been really shocked to observe the issue. I am afraid, that even the people of God are not so effectually rouzed by these warnings as they should be. One would think they would be all life and vigour at such a time as this: but alas! I am afraid it is otherwise. I am especially afraid that impenitent sinners, instead of being melted into repentance, are hardening more and more like clay in the sun. Alas! I see and hear no more of serious concern about eternal things among us, than if we lived in a healthy neighbourhood, and a peaceful unmolested country. I am afraid the case of some bears a dismal resemblance to that described in Rev. xv. 10, 11. *They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of Heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds;* no, they are sullenly obstinate to wickedness still.

Brethren, what are we doing? Are we asleep at such a time as this, when the judgments of Heaven are around us, and the fate of our country is so terribly doubtful? For God's sake, for our soul's sake, for our country's sake, let us rouse ourselves from our security; let us humble ourselves before God, *and cry mightily to him; and who can tell but he may turn away from his fierce anger?*—Which leads me to the second inference from my text, *viz.*

II. That when a nation is in such a doubtful situation that no man can know its doom, if there be any hope, it is only in the way of repentance, reformation, and earnest prayer.

This appears the only way of hope, on two accounts.

1. National sin has a direct tendency, in its own nature, to weaken and destroy a nation. It is the deadly disease of a body politic which will destroy it, without the hand of an executioner. It spreads corruption, injustice, treachery, discord, confusion, cowardice, through a nation; and it destroys public

* At this time a flux raged in the congregation, and elsewhere, which baffled all the power of medicine, and swept off some whole families almost entirely.

spirit, the love of our country, unanimity, courage, and all the social and heroic virtues which naturally tend to strengthen, defend, and advance a people. Now repentance, reformation, and prayer, is the proper cure for this disease; it purges out these internal principles of death, and implants and cherishes the opposite principles of virtue and life. But this is not all; for,

2. Repentance, reformation, and prayer, is the only method to *turn away the displeasure of God*, and obtain his favour and protection. Sin brings on a people the curse of a provoked God; and under this they fade and wither away, like a blasted flower, or a tree struck by lightning from heaven. But if it be possible to remove it, and obtain the divine favour, it is only by deep humiliation before him, by a thorough reformation from those sins that provoke him, and by earnest cries for mercy. The light of nature taught the men of Nineveh that this was the only way of hope: and revelation assures us of the very same thing. It is only to the penitent that the promises of deliverance are made; and without repentance we have no possible claim to them. Deliverances are generally answers to prayer; and therefore without earnest prayer we cannot expect them. National judgments are inflicted for national sins; and therefore reformation from national sins is the only hopeful way to escape them.

Therefore, my brethren, let us betake ourselves to this only method of hope. Let us deeply humble ourselves before God; *let us cry mightily to him; and let us turn every one from our evil ways:* and then, *who can tell but God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?*

But in all my exhortations of this kind, I must remember that repentance and reformation is the duty of fallen creatures; of creatures so depraved and feeble, that they are not able, of themselves, so much as to apply the remedy. If you attempt this work with the pride of imaginary self-sufficiency, you may be sure disappointment will be the consequence. Therefore remember, that it is the holy Spirit of God alone that

is the author of a thorough repentance and effectual reformation. It is he alone that can effectually convince the world of sin. If he be absent, legislators may make laws against vice, philosophers may reason, ministers may preach, nay, conscience may remonstrate, the divine law may prescribe and threaten, the gospel may invite and allure; but all will be vain: all will not produce one true penitent. The strongest arguments, the most melting intreaties, the most alarming denunciations, from God and man, enforced by the highest authority, or by the most compassionate tears, all will have no effect; all will not effectually reclaim one sinner, nor gain one sincere proselyte to righteousness: Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, with all their apostolical abilities, can do nothing to the purpose without the holy Spirit. *Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but God alone can give the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth;* they are both nothing together: but God, who giveth the increase (1 Cor. iii. 7.) is all in all. *Till the Spirit be poured forth from on high,* says Isaiah, *briars and thorns shall come up upon the land of my people. i. e.* Their country shall be laid waste, and be made a mere wilderness of briars and thorns, by the ravages of war: or the people themselves shall be like briars and thorns, fruitless, noxious, and troublesome. In this language the prophet Micah describes the same people: the best of them is as a briar; the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge. (Micah vii. 4.) Such shall they continue, until the holy Spirit be poured forth upon them from on high. But when the happy time comes, *then the wilderness shall be a fruitful field; then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness shall remain in the fruitful field.* This effusion of the Spirit shall put an end to the desolation of war, and establish them in the possession of lasting and extensive peace: for, as it is there added, the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the native effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance for ever: and my people shall dwell in a peaceful habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places. (Isai. xxxii. 13, 18.) You

see, my brethren, of how much importance and necessity the Spirit is to produce a reformation, and that blessed peace and security, both personal and national, both within and without, which is the effect of it!

And how are we to expect his sacred influences? Or in what way may we hope to attain them? The answer is, Pray for them: pray frequently, pray fervently, "Lord, thy spirit! O give thy spirit! that is the blessing I want; the blessing which families, and nations, and the whole human race want." Pray in your retirements; pray in your families; pray in societies appointed for that purpose; pray in warm ejaculations, pray without ceasing, for this grand fundamental blessing. Hear what encouragement Christ has given to prayer in this particular: *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.—If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that ask him!* Luke xi. 9—13. Endeavour to repent in this humble self-diffident manner; and you may hope it will at least avail to your eternal salvation; and who knows but it may avail also to turn away the fierce anger of God from your country and nation?

SERMON LXIII.

The Curse of Cowardice*.

JER. xlviii. 10.

Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully; and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.

NOTHING can be more agreeable to the God of Peace than to see universal harmony and benevolence prevail among his creatures: and he has laid them under the strongest obligations to cultivate a pacific temper towards one another, both as individuals and as nations. *Follow peace with all men,* is one of the principal precepts of our holy religion. And the great Prince of Peace has solemnly pronounced, *Blessed are the peace-makers.*

But when, in this corrupt disordered state of things, where the lusts of men are perpetually embroiling the world with wars and fightings, and throwing all into confusion; when ambition and avarice would rob us of our property, for which we have toiled, and on which we subsist; when they would enslave the free-born mind, and compel us meanly to cringe to usurpation and arbitrary power; when they would tear from our eager grasp the most valuable blessing of heaven, I mean our religion; when they invade our country, formerly the region of tranquillity, ravage our frontiers, butcher our fellow-subjects, or confine them in a barbarous captivity in the dens of savages; when our earthly all is ready to be seized by rapacious hands, and even our eternal all is in danger by the loss of our religion: when this is the case, what is then the will of God? Must peace then be maintained, maintained with our perfidious and cruel invaders? maintained at the expence of property, liberty, life,

* Preached to the militia of Hanover County, in Virginia, at a general muster, May 8, 1758, with a view to raise a company for captain Samuel Meredith.

and every thing dear and valuable? maintained, when it is in our power to vindicate our right, and do ourselves justice? Is the work of peace then our only business? No; in such a time even the God of Peace proclaims by his providence, "To arms!" Then the sword is, as it were, consecrated to God; and the art of war becomes a part of our religion. Then happy is he that shall reward our enemies as they have served us. Psalm cxxxvii. 8. Blessed is the brave soldier: blessed is the defender of his country, and the destroyer of its enemies. Blessed are they who offer themselves willingly in this service, and who faithfully discharge it. But, on the other hand, *Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully; and cursed is he that keepeth back his sword from blood.*

As to the original reference and meaning of these words, it is sufficient to my purpose to observe, that the Moabites, against whom this prophecy was immediately denounced, were a troublesome and restless nation in the neighbourhood of the Jews, who, though often subdued by them, yet upon every occasion struggled to recover their power, and renewed their hostilities. By this, and various other steps, they were arrived to the highest pitch of national guilt, and ripe for execution. The Babylonians were commissioned for this work of vengeance: and they were bound to execute the commisson faithfully, under penalty of a curse. To them this denunciation was immediately directed, *Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully*, or negligently*; *and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.* This is expressed in the form of an imprecation, or an authoritative denunciation of a curse: and in this form it might be used consistently with benevolence, by a prophet speaking as the mouth of God. But this is not a pattern for our imitation, who are peculiarly obliged, under the gospel to *Bless, and curse not*, and to *pray for all men.* However, it may be pronounced even by our lips as a declaration of the righteous curse of God against a dastardly refusal to engage in war when it is our duty; or a deceitful neg-

* ἀμελῶς, Septuag.

ligent discharge of that duty, after we have engaged in it. These are the crimes that seem intended in my text: and against each of these the tremendous curse of Jehovah is still in full force in all ages, even under the mild and gentle dispensation of the gospel. Cowardice and treachery are now as execrable as ever.

Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.—This denunciation, like the artillery of heaven, is levelled against the coward who, when God, in the course of his providence, calls him to arms, refuses to obey, and consults his own ease and safety more than his duty to God and his country.

Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully.—This seems to be levelled against another species of cowards; sly, hypocritical cowards, who undertake the work of the Lord, that is, take up arms; but they do the work of the Lord deceitfully; that is, they do not faithfully use their arms for the purposes they were taken up. They commence soldiers, not that they may serve their country, and do their duty to God, but that they may live in ease, idleness, and pleasure, and enrich themselves at the public expence. *Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully*, and serves himself under pretence of serving his country.

You, gentlemen and others, whom I this day behold with peculiar pleasure engaged in the cause of your neglected country, and who have done me the honour of inviting me to this service; a service which I am sure I should perform to your satisfaction, if my preparations and abilities were proportioned to my benevolence for you, and my concern for your success: you are peculiarly interested in the remarks I have made upon the text. And that I may contribute all in my power both to increase your number, and direct you to a proper conduct in the honourable character you sustain, I shall lay before you a brief view of the present circumstances of our country; from which it will appear, that the war in which we are engaged is a duty, or the work of the Lord; and consequently, that we are all obliged, according to our respective characters, to carry it on with vigour, under penalty of falling

under the curse of God. And then I shall shew you what is the deceitful performance of the Lord's work, or unseasonably keeping back of the sword from blood, which exposes to the curse.

I. I am to lay before you a brief view of the present circumstances of our country, which render the war in which we are engaged the work of the Lord, which consecrate swords as instruments of righteousness, and call us to the dreadful, but important duty of shedding human blood, upon penalty of falling under the tremendous curse of God.

Need I inform you what barbarities and depredations a mongrel race of Indian savages and French papists have perpetrated upon our frontiers? How many deserted or demolished houses and plantations? How wide an extent of country abandoned? How many poor families obliged to fly in consternation, and leave their all behind them? What breaches and separations between the nearest relations? What painful ruptures of heart from heart? What shocking dispersions of those once united by the strongest and most endearing ties? Some lie dead, mangled with savage wounds, consumed to ashes with outrageous flames, or torn and devoured by the beasts of the wilderness, while their bones lie whitening in the sun, and serve as tragical memorials of the fatal spot where they fell. Others have been dragged away captives, and made the slaves of imperious and cruel savages: others have made their escape, and live to lament their butchered or captivated friends and relations. In short, our frontiers have been drenched with the blood of our fellow-subjects, through the length of a thousand miles: and new wounds are still opening. We, in these inland parts of the country, are as yet unmolested, through the immerited mercy of Heaven. —But let us only glance a thought to the western extremities of our body politic; and what melancholy scenes open to our view? Now, perhaps, while I am speaking; now, while you are secure and unmolested, our fellow-subjects there may be feeling the calamities I am describing. Now, perhaps, the savage shouts and woops of Indians, and the screams and groans of

some butchered family, may be mingling their horrors, and circulating their horrendous echoes through the wilderness of rocks and mountains! Now, perhaps, some tender delicate creature may be suffering an involuntary prostitution to savage lust; and perhaps debauched and murdered by the same hand! Now, perhaps, some miserable Briton or Virginian may be passing through a tedious process of experiments in the infernal art of torture! Now some helpless children may be torn from the arms of their murdered parents, and dragged away weeping and wringing their hands, to receive their education among barbarians, and to be formed upon the model of a ferocious Indian soul!

And will these violences cease without a vigorous and timely resistance from us? Can Indian revenge and thirst for blood be glutted? or can French ambition and avarice be satisfied? No, we have no method left, but to repel force with force, and to give them blood to drink in their turn, who have drank ours. If we sit still and do nothing, or content ourselves, as alas we have hitherto, with feeble dilatory efforts, we may expect these barbarities will not only continue, but that the Indians, headed by the French, will carry their inroads still farther into the country, and reach even to us. By the desertion of our remote settlements, the frontiers are approaching every day nearer and nearer to us: and if we cannot stand our ground now, when we have above an hundred miles of a thick-settled country between us and the enemy, much less shall we be able, when our strength is weakened by so vast a loss of men, arms, and riches, and we lie exposed to their immediate incursions. Some cry, "Let the enemy come down to us, and then we will fight them." But this is the trifling excuse of cowardice or security, and not the language of prudence and fortitude. Those who make this plea, if the enemy should take them at their word, and make them so near a visit, would be as forward in flight as they are now backward to take up arms.

Such, my brethren, such, alas! is the present state of our country: it bleeds in a thousand veins; and

without timely remedy, the wound will prove mortal. And in such circumstances, is it not our duty in the sight of God, is it not a work to which the Lord loudly calls us, to take up arms for the defence of our country? Certainly it is: and *cursed is he* who, having no ties sufficiently strong to confine him at home, *keepeth his sword from blood.* The man that can desert the cause of his country in such an exigency; his country, in the blessings of which he shared, while in peace and prosperity; and which is therefore entitled to his sympathy and assistance in the day of its distress; that cowardly ungrateful man sins against God and his country, and deserves the curse of both. Such a conduct in such a conjuncture, is a moral evil, a gross wickedness; and exposes the wretch to the heavy curse of God both in this and the eternal world.

And here I cannot but observe, that among the various and numberless sins under which the country groans, and which must be looked upon as the causes of our public calamities, by every one that believes a divine Providence; a doctrine so comfortable, and so essential both in natural and revealed religion; (an article in the creed of heathens and Mahometans, as well as Jews and Christians); I say, among these various sins, cowardice and security are none of the least. He that hath determined the bounds of our habitation, hath planted us in a land of liberty and plenty; a land, till lately, unalarmed with the terrors of war, and unstained with human blood: indeed, all things considered, there are but few such happy spots on our globe. And must it not highly provoke our divine Benefactor, to see a people thus distinguished with blessings, so insensible of their worth, so ungrateful for them, and so unacquainted with their own unworthiness to receive them? What can be more evidential of their undue apprehensions of the worth of these blessings, than their being so little concerned to secure and recover them! The generality among us have acted as if their interests at stake were so trifling, that it would not be worth while to take pains, or encounter dangers, to preserve them. What greater evidence can be given of ingratitude than a supine neglect of these blessings, and such

a stupidly tame and irresisting resignation of them into bloody and rapacious hands! And what can be more evidential of a proud insensibility of our unworthiness of such blessings, than our being so inapprehensive of losing them, even in the most threatening and dangerous circumstances! Our countrymen in general have acted, as if beings of their importance and merit might certainly rest in the quiet unmolested possession of their liberty and property, without any one daring to disturb them, and without their doing any thing for their own defence; or as if neither God nor man could strip them of their enjoyments. What vain self-confident presumption, what intolerable insolence is this, in a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, who have forfeited every blessing, even the ground they tread upon, and the air they breathe in; and who live merely by the immerited grace and bounty of God. Is not cowardice and security, or an unwillingness to engage with all our might in defence of our country, in such a situation, an enormous wickedness in the sight of God, and worthy of his curse, as well as a scandalous meanness in the sight of men, and worthy of public shame and indignation? Is it not fit that those who so contemptuously depreciate the rich and undeserved bounties of Heaven, and who swell so insolently with a vain conceit of their own importance and worth, should be punished with the loss of these blessings! What discipline can be more seasonable or congruous? May we not suppose, that divine Providence has permitted our body politic to suffer wound after wound, and baffled all our languid efforts, in order to give it sensibility, and rouse us to exert our strength in more vigorous efforts? Has not the curse of God lain heavy upon our country, because we have *done the work of the Lord deceitfully, and kept back our swords from blood?*

And shall this guilt increase from year to year, till we are entirely crushed with the enormous load? Shall neither the fear of Jehovah's curse, nor the love of our country, nor even the love of ourselves, and our own personal interest, constrain us at length to relieve our ravaged country, and defend the blessings which God

has entrusted to our custody, as well as lent us to enjoy? —Blessed be God, and thanks to you, brave soldiers, for what I now see. I see you engaged in this good cause: and may the effectual blessing of Heaven be upon you, instead of the curse entailed upon cowardice and treachery! But are there no more to join with you? what! none more in this crowd? None more in Hanover? which I think should shew itself worthy of precedence, and exhibit a brave example to other counties: this is what may reasonably be expected, from the number of our militia, the high price of our staple commodity, the frequency and variety of our religious instructions; and, I may add, from our own former good conduct in such an emergency. Hanover had the honour of sending out the first company of volunteers that were raised in the colony*. And are we degenerated so soon? Or is our danger less now than immediately after Braddock's defeat? Or are we now inured and hardened to bad news, so that the calamities of our frontiers, which have been growing every year, have now ceased to be objects of our compassion?

I am sorry to tell you, that the company now forming is not yet completed, though under officers from among yourselves, from whom you may expect good usage; and the encouragement is so unusually great, and the time of service so short†. May I not reasonably insist upon it, that the company be made up this very day before we leave this place? Methinks your king, your country, nay, your own interests command me: and therefore I must insist upon it.—Oh! for the all-prevailing force of Demosthenes's oratory—but I recall my wish, that I may correct it—Oh! for the influence of the Lord of armies, the God of battles, the Author of true courage, and every heroic virtue, to fire you into patriots and soldiers this moment!—Ye young and hardy men, whose very faces seem to speak that God and nature formed you for soldiers, who are free from the incumbrance of families depending upon you

* Under Captain Averton, immediately after General Braddock's defeat.

† Only till the first of December next.

for subsistence, and who are perhaps but of little service to society while at home, may I not speak for you, and declare as your mouth, "Here we are, all ready to abandon our ease, and rush into the glorious dangers of the field, in defence of our country?" Ye that love your country, enlist; for honour will follow you in life or death in such a cause. You that love your religion, enlist; for your religion is in danger. Can protestant Christianity expect quarters from heathen savages and French papists? Sure, in such an alliance, the powers of hell make a third party. Ye that love your friends and relations, enlist; lest ye see them enslaved or butchered before your eyes. Ye that would catch at money, here is a proper bait for you; ten pounds for a few months service, besides the usual pay of soldiers. I seriously make the proposal to you, not only as a subject of the best of kings, and a friend to your country, but as *a servant of the most High God;* for I am fully persuaded, what I am recommending is his will; and disobedience to it may expose you to his curse.

This proposal is not liable to the objections that have been urged against former measures for raising men. You cannot any longer object, "that you are dragged away like slaves against your wills, while others are without reason exempted;" for now it is left to your own honour, and you may act as free men. Nor can you object, "that you are arbitrarily thrust under the command of foreign, unknown, or disagreeable officers; for the gentleman that has the immediate command of this company, and his subordinate officers, are of yourselves, your neighbours children, and perhaps your old companions. And I hope I may add, you need not object, that you shall be badly used: for, Gentlemen-Officers, may I not promise for you, that not one man in your company shall be treated with cruelty or injustice as far as your authority or influence can prevent? May I not be your security, that none but the guilty shall be punished, and they only according to the nature of the offence? Perhaps some may object, that should they enter the army, their morals would be in danger of infection, and their virtue would

be perpetually shocked with horrid scenes of vice. This may also be a discouragement to parents to consent to their childrens engaging in so good a cause. I am glad to hear this objection, when it is sincere, and not an empty excuse: and I wish I could remove it, by giving you an universal assurance that the army is a school of Religion; and that soldiers, as they are more exposed to death than other men, are proportionably better prepared for it than others. But alas! the reverse of this is too true; and the contagion of vice and irreligion is perhaps nowhere stronger than in the army; where, one would think, the supreme tribunal should be always in view, and it should be their chief care to prepare for eternity, on the slippery brink of which they stand every moment. But, Gentlemen-Officers, I must again appeal to you, that as for this company, you will not willingly allow any form of vice to be practised in it with impunity; but will always endeavour to recommend and enforce religion and good morals by your example and authority, and to suppress the contrary? May I not give the public the satisfaction of such an assurance concerning you, that whatever others do, as for you and your company you will serve the Lord? Do you not own yourselves bound to this in honour and duty? Such a conduct, I can assure you, will render you popular among the wise and good; though perhaps it may expose you to the senseless contempt of fools, who make a mock of sin, and who esteem it bravery to insult that God, *in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways.* Such a conduct will afford you pleasure in the review, when the terrors of the bloody field are spread round you, and death starts up before you in a thousand shocking forms. Such a conduct will be a source of true courage, and render you nobly indifferent about life or death in a good cause. And let me honestly warn you, that if you do not maintain such a conduct, you will bitterly repent it, either in time or eternity.

But I return to invite others to join with you in this important expedition.—What a crowd of important arguments press you on every hand! What can our legislature do more than they have done to engage

you? If such unusual encouragement does not prevail upon you to enlist as volunteers, what remains but that you must be forced to it by authority? For our country must be defended: and if nothing but force can constrain you to take up arms in its defence, then force must be used: persons of such a sordid unmanly spirit, are not to expect the usage of freemen.—Think what the paternal care of our sovereign has done for us: and how many millions of money, and thousands of men, our mother-country has furnished for our defence. And shall we do nothing for ourselves? Great Britain, I own, is interested in our protection: but can she be as much interested as ourselves?—Consider what the brave New England-men have done, after so many mortifications and disappointments, and their treasury so much exhausted. By the best accounts I have had, the little colony of Massachusets-Bay has raised no less than 7000 men, though not larger perhaps than 15 or 20 of those 53 counties contained in Virginia. And since we have the same interests at stake, shall we not cheerfully furnish our quota for the public service?—We all admire the bravery and success of the king of Prussia: but his success must be greatly owing to the bravery of his subjects, as well as his own:—he has almost as many soldiers as subjects. And while he has almost miraculously stood his ground against such superior numbers, shall we, with the advantage of numbers on our side, be perpetually flying before a pitiful enemy, and tamely give up our country to their ravages? Let us strenuously exert that superior force which a gracious Providence has put in our hands: and we may soon expect, through the concurrence of Heaven, that we shall again enjoy the blessings of peace. Whatever intelligence our artful enemies may send, or the cowardly among ourselves may believe, there is no reason to conclude that the French regulars upon this continent are half so many as ours: and as to the *coloni*, or country-militia, we are certainly 20, perhaps 40, to one. Let us then, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, let us collect our whole strength, and give one decisive blow; and we may humbly hope victory will be ours.

Every one can complain of the bad management of our public undertakings, and lament the general security and inactivity that prevails:—every one can wish that something were effectually done, and that this and that person would enlist:—every one can tell what great atchievements he would perform, were it not for this and that, and a hundred obstructions in his way. But all this idle complaining, wishing, lamenting, and boasting, will answer no end. Something must be done! must be done by you! Therefore, instead of assuming the state of patriots and heroes at home,—to arms! away to the field, and prove your pretensions sincere. Let the thunder of this imprecation rouse you out of your ease and security, *Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully; and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.* God sent an angel from heaven to curse the dastardly inhabitants of Meroz, who refused to take up arms for the defence of their country. (Judges v. 23.) *Curse ye Meroz*, said the angel of the Lord, *curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof: because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.* And shall this curse fall upon Virginia? No, fly from it by venturing your lives for your country: for this curse is far more terrible than any thing that can befal you in the field of battle.—But it is not enough for you to undertake this work: you are also obliged faithfully to perform it, as the work of the Lord. And this leads me,

II. To shew you what is that deceitful performance of the Lord's work, or unseasonably keeping back the sword from blood, which exposes to his curse.

If soldiers, instead of abandoning their ease and pleasure, and risquing their lives in defence of their country, should unman themselves with sensual pleasures and debauchery; if, instead of searching out the enemy, they keep out of their way, lest they should search out and find them: if they lie sleeping or rioting in forts and places of safety, while their country is ravaged, perhaps in their very neighbourhood: when they waste their courage in broils and duels among themselves, or in tyranizing over those that are under

their command: when they lay themselves open to false alarms, by being credulous to every account that magnifies the force of the enemy: when they are tedious or divided in their consultations, and slow and faint in the execution: when they consult rather what may be most safe for themselves than most beneficial to their country: when they keep skirmishing at a distance, instead of making a bold push, and bringing the war to a speedy issue by a decisive stroke: when they are fond of prolonging the war, that they may live and riot the longer at the public expence: when they sell themselves and their country to the enemy for a bribe: in short, when they do not conscientiously exert all their power to repel the enemy, and protect the state that employs them, but only seek to serve themselves, then they do the work of the Lord deceitfully; and his curse lights upon them as their heavy doom. I leave others to judge, whether the original of this ugly picture is to be found anywhere in the universe. But as for you of this company, may I not presume that you will behave in a nobler manner? Shall not sobriety, public spirit, courage, fidelity, and good discipline be maintained among you? This I humbly recommend to you; and may God enable you to act accordingly!

Thus far have I addressed you as soldiers, or at least as persons concerned in your stations to do all in your power to save your country. But we must not part thus. It is possible we may never meet more, till we mingle with the assembled universe before the supreme tribunal: therefore, before I dismiss you, I must address myself to you as sinners, and as candidates for eternity. You are concerned to save your souls, as well as your country; and should you save or gain a kingdom, or even the whole world, and lose your souls, your loss will be irreparable.

None of you I hope will reply, "I am now a soldier, and have nothing more to do with religion:" What! has a soldier nothing to do with religion? Is a soldier under no obligations to the God that made him, and that furnishes him with every blessing? Is not a sol-

dier as much exposed to death as other men? May not a soldier be damned for sin as well as other sinners? And will he be able to dwell with devouring fire and everlasting burnings? Are these things so? Can any of you be so stupid as to think them so? If not, you must own, that even a soldier has as much concern with religion as another. Therefore hear me seriously upon this head.

You are about entering into the school of vice; for such the army has generally been. And are any of you already initiated into any of the mysteries of iniquity there practised? Must I so much as suppose that some of you, who have bravely espoused the cause of your country, are addicted to drunkenness, swearing, whoredom, or any gross vice? I cannot now take time to reason with you for your conviction: it may suffice to appeal to your own reason and conscience. Do you act well in indulging these vices? Will you approve of it in the honest hour of death? Will this conduct prove a source of courage to you, when the arrows of death are flying thick around you, and scores are falling on every side? No, you are self-condemned; and may I not reasonably hope, you will endeavour to reform what you cannot but condemn? Soldiers, indeed, are too commonly addicted to such immoralities; but are they the better soldiers on that account? Can an oath or a debauch inspire them with a rational fortitude against the fears of death? Would not prayer and a life of holiness better answer this purpose? Their courage, if they have any, must be the effect, not of thought, but of the want of thought; it must be a brutal stupidity, or ferocity; but not the rational courage of a man or a Christian.

Some of you, I doubt not, are happily free from these gross vices: and long may you continue so! But I must tell you, this *negative* goodness is not enough to prepare you for death, or to constitute you true Christians. The temper of your minds must be changed by the power of divine grace; and you must be turned from the love and practice of all sin, to the love and practice of universal holiness. You must become humble, broken-hearted penitents, and true be-

lievers in Jesus Christ. You must be enabled to live righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present evil world. This is religion: this is religion that will keep you uncorrupted in the midst of vice and debauchery: this is religion, that will befriend you when cannons roar, and swords gleam around you, and you are every moment expecting the deadly wound: this is religion that will support you in the agonies of death, and assure you of a happy immortality.

But are not some of you conscious that you are destitute of such a religion as this? Then it is high time for you to think on your condition in sober sadness. Pray to that powerful and gracious Being, who can form your hearts and lives after this sacred model. Oh! pray earnestly, pray frequently, for this blessing: and use all the means of grace in that manner which your circumstances will permit.—Remember also, that if you try to prolong your life by a dastardly conduct, your life will lie under the curse of Heaven; and you have little reason to hope you will ever improve it as a space for repentance.—Remember also to put your confidence in God; who keeps the thread of your life, and the event of war, in his own hand. Devoutly acknowledge his providence in all your ways, and be sensible of your dependence upon it.

And now, to conclude my address to you, as the mouth of this multitude, and of your countrymen in general, I heartily bid you farewell. Farewell, my dear friends, my brave fellow-subjects, the guardians of your poor ravaged country. God grant you may return in safety and honour, and that we may yet welcome you home, crowned with laurels of victory! Or if any of you should lose your lives in so good a cause, may you enjoy a glorious and blessed immortality in the region of everlasting peace and tranquillity! Methinks I may take upon me to promise you the prayers and good wishes of thousands. Thousands, whom you leave behind, will think of you with affectionate anxiety, will wish you success, and congratulate your return, or lament your death. Once more I pour out all my heart in another affectionate farewell. May the Lord preserve your going out, and your coming

in, from this time forth, and even for evermore. Amen.

Here I thought to have concluded. But I must take up a few minutes more to ask this crowd, Is there nothing to be done by us who stay at home, towards the defence of our country, and to promote the success of the expedition now in hand? Shall we sin on still impenitent and incorrigible? Shall we live as if we and our country were self-dependent, and had nothing to do with the supreme Ruler of the universe? Can an army of saints or of heroes defend an obnoxious people, ripe for destruction, from the righteous judgment of God? The cause in which these brave men, and our army in general, are engaged, is not so much their own as ours: divine Providence considers them not so much in their private personal character as in their public character, as the representatives and guardians of their country; and therefore they will stand or fall, not so much according to their own personal character, as according to the public character of the people, whose cause they have undertaken. Be it known to you, then, their success depends upon us, even more than upon themselves. Therefore let us all turn every one from his evil ways. *Let the wicked forsake his way*, &c. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, which is lifted up over our guilty heads, that we may be exalted in due time. I could venture the reputation of my judgment and veracity, that it will never be well with our country till there be more of the fear and love of God in it, and till the name of Jesus be of more importance among us. I could prescribe a method for our deliverance, which is at once infallible, and also cheap, and safe, and so far from endangering the life of any, that it would secure the everlasting life of all that comply with it. Ye that complain of the burden of our public taxes; ye that love ease, and shrink from the dangers of war; ye that wish to see peace restored once more; ye that would be happy beyond the grave, and live for ever, attend to my proposal: it is this, a thorough national reformation. This will do what millions of money and thousands of men, with guns and swords, and

all the dreadful artillery of death could not do; it will procure us peace again; a lasting well-established peace. We have tried other expedients without this long enough: let us now try this new expedient, the success of which I dare to warrant. And do not object that such a general reformation is beyond your power; for a general reformation must begin with individuals: therefore do you, through the grace of God, act your part; begin at home, and endeavour to reform yourselves, and those under your influence.

It is a natural inference from what has been said, that if the defence of our country, in which we can stay but a few years at most, and from which we must ere long take our flight, be so important a duty, then how much more are we obliged to "seek a better country", *i. e.* "an heavenly;" and to carry on a vigorous war against our spiritual enemies, that would rob us of our heavenly inheritance! therefore, in the name of Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, I invite you all to enlist in the spiritual warfare. Now proclaim eternal war against all sin. Now *take to you the whole armour of God; quit you like men; be strong:* and, for your encouragement, remember, *He that overcometh, shall inherit all things;* he shall enter into a kingdom that cannot be shaken—cannot be shaken with those storms of public calamities which toss and agitate this restlesss ocean of a world. In that blessed harbour may we all rest at last!

END OF THE SERMONS.

POEMS.*

ON THE BIRTH OF JOHN ROGERS DAVIES,

The Author's Third Son.

THOU little wond'rous miniature of man,
Form'd by unerring Wisdom's perfect plan;
Thou little stranger, from eternal night
Emerging into life's immortal light;
Thou heir of worlds unknown, thou candidate
For an important everlasting state,
Where this young embryo shall its pow'rs expand,
Enlarging, rip'ning still, and never stand.
This glimm'ring spark of being, just now struck
From nothing by the all-creating Rock,
To immortality shall flame and burn,
When suns and stars to native darkness turn;
Thou shalt the ruins of the worlds survive,
And through the rounds of endless ages live.
Now thou art born into an anxious state
Of dubious trial for thy future fate:
Now thou art listed in the war of life,
The prize immense, and O! severe the strife.

Another birth awaits thee, when the hour
Arrives that lands thee on th' eternal shore
(And O! 'tis near, with winged haste 'twill come,
Thy cradle rocks toward the neighb'ring tomb);
Then shall immortals say, "A son is born,"
While thee as dead mistaken mortals mourn;
From glory then to glory thou shalt rise,
Or sink from deep to deeper miseries;
Ascend perfection's everlasting scale,
Or still descend from gulph to gulph in hell.

Thou embryo-angel, or thou infant fiend,
A being now begun, but ne'er to end,
What boding fears a Father's heart torment,
Trembling and anxious for the grand event,
Lest thy young soul, so late by Heav'n bestow'd,
Forget her Father, and forget her God!
Lest, while imprison'd in this house of clay,
To tyrant lusts she fall an helpless prey!

* The following Poems are here retained as a Specimen of the Author's Poetry.

And lest, descending still from bad to worse,
Her immortality should prove her curse!

Maker of souls! avert so dire a doom,
Or snatch her back to native nothing's gloom!

ON THE WORDS OF OUR LORD, LOVEST THOU ME? JOHN xxi. 17.

MY God, the wretch that does not love thy name,
To life and being forfeits all his claim;
And may he sink to nothing, whence he came!
Or let the yawn of the dire mouth of hell
Receive him, with his fellow-fiends to dwell!

O, if my heart does not to thee aspire,
If aught with equal fervor I desire,
I'm self-condemn'd, and doom myself to fire:
Let not my guilty breath profane thine air,
Nor groaning earth the monstrous burden bear?
Let clouds, with vengeance big, burst o'er my head,
And vollies of red thunder strike me dead;
The sun convert his gentle rays to flames,
And blast the miscreant with his vengeful beams,
The whole creation rise in arms for Thee,
To vindicate the rights of thy divinity.

Vile wretch, that dares refuse to love a God,
Who form'd me man out of my native clod:
Whose breath the faculty of love inspir'd
And with the heav'nly spark my bosom fir'd;
Whose uncreated beauties charm the sight
Of gazing angels in the realms of light.

Thy glories, faintly copy'd, round me shine,
Great God! and beam through all these works of thine,
Proclaiming Thee their Origin divine:
Thy grace diffus'd around in thousand rills,
A thousand worlds with endless rapture fills:
Thou too, when man to dreadful ruin fell,
Helpless, unpity'd, on the brink of hell,
When frowning justice did the prey demand,
And none could rescue from its vengeful hand,

Thou, touch'd with pity, didst avert his doom,
And gave thy Son a victim in his room!
Nail'd to the cross the bleeding Saviour hangs,
And courts my love with groans and dying pangs.
O! I must love—nor can the pains and blood
Of an incarnate Godhead be withstood!

Yet ah! in some dark hour I scarcely know
Whether I love my gracious God, or no:
Gloomy suspicions, painful jealousies,
And anxious doubts in all their horrors rise:
I hear the whisp'rings of misgiving fear,
"Thy love is feign'd, thine ardor insincere."—
Too true, too true, my trembling soul replies,
Else whence so often could these languors rise?
Ah! these unruly passions would not rove
Thus wildly were they fir'd with sacred love,
Nor would the fervors of devotion die
So often, and my pow'rs lethargic lie.

And yet, my God, in some bright moment too,
Methinks I feel the flame divinely glow:
To thee my passions with such ardor move,
That if I love Thee not, I know not what I love.
If I'm deceiv'd in this with empty show,
Then my existence is uncertain too;
An universal sceptic I commence
Amidst the glare of brightest evidence,
In spite of reason, and in spite of sense!
O! if I love Thee not, as fears suggest,
Why am I in thine absence thus distrest?
Whence this strange tumult, this uneasy pain,
Till thy sweet smiles compose my soul again?
Whence these wild pantings of intense desire?
Or why should breathing dust so high aspire?
I see my busy fellow-worms pursue
Created good, and nothing nobler view;
They lavish life away estrang'd from thee,
In undisturb'd serene stupidity.
And why like them can't I contented play,
And eat and drink, and sleep my hours away?
Whence this immense ambition in my mind,
To scorn all joys but those of heav'nly kind?
Why should a worm, an animated clod,
Disdain all bliss beneath a boundless God?

O! what but the attractive force of love
Thus rais'd my spirit to the worlds above?

Say, great Omniscient! for thou know'st my heart,
Can nature charm me, if thy smiles depart?
Can riches, pleasures, honours, empires, crowns,
Or friends delight me, if I feel thy frowns?
No; all creation dwindles to a toy,
And heav'n itself is stript of ev'ry joy;
The radiant sun is darken'd to my eyes,
And ev'ry blooming beauty round me dies.

Thou great Invisible! Thou dear unknown!
Why thus to Thee should my affections run,
Thus through the objects of my senses break,
And charms unseen, and hidden glories seek?
Deep in recesses of approachless light,
Thou sitt'st inthron'd beyond my feeble sight;
Yet, drawn by some strange mystic influence,
I love Thee more than all that strikes my sense,
Than all my ears have heard, or eyes have seen,
Or all my fancy's liveliest pow'rs can feign.

O! if thy love does not my heart inflame,
Why does my soul rejoice at Jesus' name?
His name is music to my ravish'd ears,
Sweeter than that which charms the heavn'ly spheres;
A cheering cordial to my fainting breast:
My hope, my joy, my triumph, and my rest.

I spring from earth, and heav'n is my abode,
When I can speak those charming words, "My God."
My God! celestial rapture's in the sound:
Be thou but mine, and all the sun rolls round.
Without one secret murmur, I resign:
I have enough, may I but call thee *mine*.

O! if I love thee not, why do I choose,
Why love a mansion in thine earthly house?
The sacred morning shines with heav'nly rays,
More bright, more charming than ten thousand days,
Which bids me visit that delightful place:
There would I dwell, and pass my life away,
Till death conveys me to a brighter day.

In all the institutions of thy grace,
For thee I look, and long to see thy face:
When at thy throne I bow the suppliant knee,
Is pray'r a thoughtless cold formality?
Or can my pray'rs content me without thee?
No; these are but the channels of thy grace;
Transparent glasses, where I see thy face;
I thirst for living waters all in vain,
Shouldst Thou thy gracious influence restrain:
The radiant mirrors show me nothing fair,
Unless I see my God reflected there.

Then peace, my restless and suspicious heart;
And ye, dire boding jealousies, depart;
I love my God, or else I nothing love,
And the pure flame ere long shall blaze above,
And in its native element aspire,
Without one mist to damp, or cloud t'obscure the fire.

A MINISTER'S REFLECTIONS ON THE DEATH OF ONE OF HIS PEOPLE.

OF my dear flock one more is gone,
T' appear before th' eternal throne,
And pass the grand decisive test:
"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust:"
Surviving friends with tears intrust,
There till the general doom to rest.

The soul, dismiss'd from cumbrous clay,
Expatiates in eternal day,
And with the Great Jehovah dwells,
The dawn of immortality
With scenes unknown fills all the eye,
And wonders vast and new reveals.

Thus while I'm dreaming life away,
Or books and studies charm the day,
My flock is dying one by one;
Convey'd beyond my warning voice,
To endless pains, or endless joys;
For ever happy or undone.

I too ere long must yield my breath;
My mouth for ever clos'd in death,
Shall sound the gospel trump no more:
Then, while my charge is in my reach,
With fervor let me pray and preach,
And eager catch the flying hour!

Almighty grace, my soul inspire,
And touch my lips with heav'nly fire!
Let faith, and love, and zeal arise!
O! teach me that divinest art,
To reach the conscience, gain the heart,
And train immortals for the skies!

THE END.

W. Nicholson, Printer, Warner-street.